



Illness in Food Establishments

Protecting the Public's Health by Responding Properly February 2026

Illness incidents involving vomiting or diarrhea require immediate and proper response. Under **Minnesota Rule 4626.0123**, all food establishments are required to maintain a **Vomit and Diarrheal Incident Response Plan** and a fully stocked **Incident Response Kit**. These plans must be available upon inspector request, and employees should be trained on proper response procedures.

Vomit and diarrhea can easily spread disease-causing pathogens, including norovirus. Proper cleanup, sanitation, and exclusion practices are critical to preventing foodborne illness.

What Should Be in the Incident Response Kit?

To ensure quick and effective cleanup, your kit should include:

- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) (gloves, aprons, masks, goggles, etc.)
- Absorbent material (kitty litter or baking soda)
- Disposable scoops or scrapers
- Paper towels
- Trash bags and ties
- Exclusion equipment (caution tape, wet floor signs)
- EPA-registered disinfectant effective against norovirus or a chlorine bleach solution (1,000–5,000 ppm) made with unscented liquid bleach

Resources

[Simplified Clean Up Poster](#)

[Norovirus Fact Sheet](#)

[Employee Illness Log](#)

[Reporting Food/Waterborne Illness](#)



Proper Cleanup Procedures

When an incident occurs:

1. Put on appropriate PPE before beginning cleanup.
2. Clear all people from the affected area and block it off if necessary.
3. Apply absorbent material and allow all liquid to be fully absorbed.
4. Use disposable scoops or paper towels to remove material and place it in a sealed trash bag.
5. Clean affected surfaces with detergent.
6. Rinse with soapy water, then rinse again with clean water.
7. Dispose of all waste and single-use items properly.

Sanitization Practices

Handwashing should occur whenever you proceed from one step to another; come into contact with potentially contaminated items; switch gloves (which should be changed whenever touching a new or non-contaminated source or object); remove any piece of PPE that could be contaminated; and after disposing of PPE or waste.

Never vacuum over a vomit or diarrheal incident. Vacuuming can aerosolize norovirus and other pathogens, increasing the likelihood of their spread.

For soft or absorbent surfaces, such as carpet, steam cleaning is recommended. For hard, non-absorbent surfaces, use an **EPA-registered antimicrobial proven effective against norovirus and/or a chlorine bleach solution of 1,000–5,000 ppm**.

For disinfection to be effective, the sanitizer used must remain on the surface for its required contact time for norovirus. Contact time means the surface must stay wet with the sanitizer for the full duration listed on the manufacturer's label. Disinfectants must remain wet for their entire contact time to be effective.

Bleach at the listed concentration has a contact time of **5 minutes**. Steam cleaning at **158°F** has a contact time of **5 minutes** (meaning the treated area must remain at that temperature for the full duration), and steam cleaning at **212°F** has a contact time of **1 minute**. For a list of other EPA-registered antimicrobial products effective against norovirus and their contact times, [click here](#).

When disinfecting after an incident, the immediate area and **25 feet surrounding** it should be disinfected with an EPA-approved sanitizer. For bleach solutions, **5,000 ppm** should be used at the immediate site and within **10 feet** of the incident, followed by at least **1,000 ppm** for the remaining area. Any single-service items and food within this range should be considered contaminated and discarded. Additionally, all points of indirect hand contact, such as handrails, doorknobs, menus, and similar surfaces, should be sanitized.

Preventing the Spread

Proper exclusion practices are just as important as cleanup. The duties below must be performed, as listed in (MN Rule 4626.0040-.0050)



Managers must:

- Exclude employees with vomiting or diarrhea until 24 hours after symptoms stop
- Record employee illness incidents in an Employee Illness Log
- Notify Horizon Public Health or the Minnesota Department of Health if an employee is diagnosed with:
 - Norovirus
 - Salmonella
 - Shigella
 - Hepatitis A
 - Shiga toxin-producing E. coli
 - Other enteric bacterial, viral, or parasitic pathogens

Employees must:

- Stay home until 24 hours after symptoms end
- Report symptoms such as vomiting, diarrhea, jaundice, sore throat with fever, or infected wounds
- Report diagnoses or recent involvement in a foodborne illness outbreaks

If customer complaints or illness reports are received, the person in charge must notify public health authorities immediately.

Disclosure of health-related information is required by state law and does not violate Earned Sick and Safe Time regulations.