

RWU Advisory: Students should take precautions for stomach virus

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Contact: Kathleen McMahon

401-254-3161

Dear Students:

Roger Williams University (RWU) Health Services has received calls from a number of students reporting symptoms of a stomach virus (i.e. nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea). These symptoms are consistent with noro-virus infection. See <http://health.ri.gov/diseases/norovirus/> for more information. We are working with the Rhode Island Department of Health (HEALTH) to find the likely cause and to help prevent more students from getting sick. The symptoms are self limiting in 24 to 48 hours and require no specific treatment except rest and hydration.

If you have not been feeling well, please visit the Health Services website (<http://www.rwu.edu/campus-life/health-counseling/health-services>) for helpful information, or you may call RWU's Health Services at (401) 254-3516 to speak to a nurse for advice. Laboratory tests are usually not necessary for all patients for this type of illness.

Please call Health Services between 8:30 A.M. and 5 P.M. Monday through Friday (or Public Safety after hours) if you:

- Have *any* symptoms of dehydration (very thirsty, lightheaded, dizzy, or confused).
- Have diarrhea or vomiting that lasts more than a few days.
- Are vomiting blood, have bloody diarrhea, or feel severe stomach pain.
- Have not had to urinate for more than 8 hours (during the day).

Gastrointestinal illness typically spreads when people come in contact with the virus on a contaminated surface touched by an infected person. Here are some precautions all students and staff should take:

- Thorough and frequent hand-washing with soap and water is the best way to prevent the spread of germs that cause illness. Everyone should wash hands after using the toilet and before eating or preparing food. An alcohol-based hand sanitizer may be somewhat helpful, but is not a substitute for thorough hand-washing.
- Don't share eating utensils, tooth paste, towels or face cloths.
- Anyone who works in food service or preparation should not handle food in any way while having symptoms and for at least 2 days after symptoms go away.
- Clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces after vomiting or diarrhea with a bleach-based household cleaner, following the product directions.
- Machine wash any soiled clothes and linens thoroughly and separately from other laundry, then machine dry thoroughly at the maximum heat setting.
- Anyone who's ill should sleep and recover in his or her own room, and drink plenty of fluids.

Please also note that our custodial staff is also taking additional cleaning measures to help prevent further spread of illness.

Sincerely,

Dr. Kathleen McMahon

AVP/Dean of Students, Roger Williams University