

# Cleaning up vomit: Puke can make you sick

Public vomiting happens: over 550 ill in norovirus outbreaks at USC and Georgetown

Use the proper tools when cleaning up vomit, including disposable latex gloves, a filter mask, and apron. Pathogens can be aerosolized in vomit and be spread outside visually affected areas.

When cleaning up vomit:

- wipe the spill with paper towels and bag the residues;
- pour bleach solution or other disinfectant intended to kill pathogens on and around the area;
- let solution act for 20 minutes;
- wipe the remaining solution and mop the area;
- all disposable material should be discarded in plastic bags;
- nondisposable material should be bleached and air-dried; and,
- double-bag and tie up plastic garbage bags and discard



In early October, over 330 students at USC in Los Angeles and an additional 200 students at Georgetown University in Washington, DC and became ill with norovirus. The outbreak at Georgetown overwhelmed local hospitals and there were reports of students vomiting in the halls and waiting rooms. Public vomiting is particularly a problem as the act of spewing can cause virus particles to spread. In 1998, 126 people at a British hotel were infected with norovirus after an ill individual vomited at one of the tables. Some of

those who were made ill were sitting 4 tables away.

**Barf should be cleaned up as soon as possible, and an area beyond just where puke can be seen needs to be disinfected.**



## Food Safety Infosheet October 21, 2008

For more information contact Ben Chapman,  
bchapman@uoguelph.ca or Doug Powell, dpowell@ksu.edu  
[www.foodsafety.ksu.edu](http://www.foodsafety.ksu.edu) [foodsafetyinfosheets.ksu.edu](http://foodsafetyinfosheets.ksu.edu)