



Healthy People. Healthy Communities.
Department of Public Health & Human Services

Steve Bullock, Governor

Sheila Hogan, Director

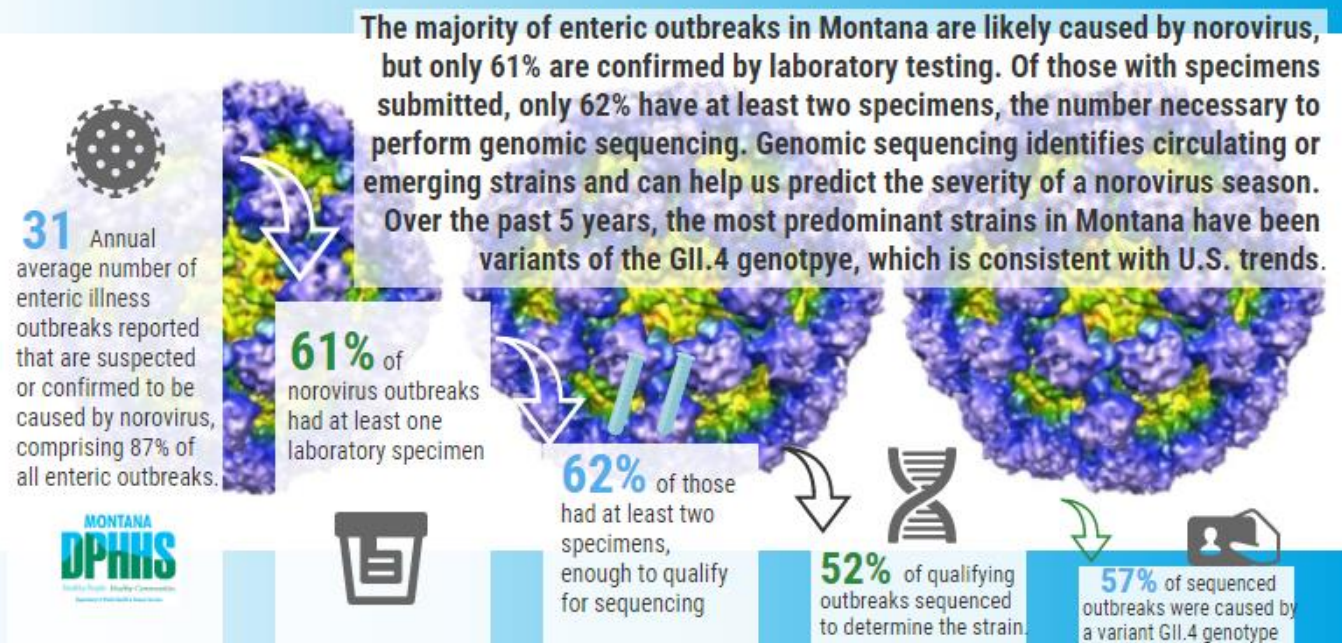
To all Laboratorians,

Norovirus season is upon us and the Montana Department of Health and Human Services (DPHHS) needs your help!!! To improve our outbreak surveillance for norovirus, we are asking you to **submit your positive norovirus specimens** to the Montana Public Health Laboratory (MTPHL). Outbreaks occurring in congregate settings such as schools, nursing homes, and child care settings are reportable and provide a glimpse of the infectious diseases circulating in Montana.

Confirming the causative agent for an outbreak is an important task and is necessary to determine the burden of disease, respond appropriately to the disease threat, and accurately understand the pathogenicity of the organism. We are very interested in receiving specimens from these outbreaks to perform further surveillance testing, but unfortunately do not always get specimens submitted due to various reasons.

NOROVIRUS OUTBREAKS IN MONTANA

A viral trend continues



Data from Montana Outbreak Reporting System, 2014-2018.

The MTPHL and the Communicable Disease Epidemiology program (CDEpi) partner with the Idaho Bureau of Laboratories to participate in CaliciNet, which is a national database that collects information on norovirus strains associated with gastroenteritis outbreaks.¹ According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the most common strain of norovirus has been GII.4. This is the same strain that has caused the most outbreaks worldwide since 2002.²

In recent years, other strains, such as GII.17 and GII.2, have become more common and there has been an increase in the number of outbreak strains identified during one season, both in Montana and across the United States.³

To help in our surveillance effort, we are asking you to submit positive norovirus specimens to the MTPHL. These specimens will be placed in storage and if an outbreak is identified, these specimens will be further tested and sequenced to determine the outbreak strain.

- If feasible, please send all positive norovirus specimens to the Montana Public Health Laboratory for storage and possible testing in the event of a confirmed outbreak (Oct 2019-April 2020 only).
 - A minimum of one (1) mL of raw stool is required for testing. Stool should be refrigerated or frozen and shipped to MTPHL in cold condition. (Please consider this if you are sending transport swabs to a reference laboratory for PCR testing.)
 - Laboratories on the courier route should use the courier system to send specimens.
- Please mark slips as: “positive for norovirus - hold for outbreak surveillance”.
- Further norovirus testing and sequencing will be performed at **no cost** on identified outbreak specimens and as requested by CDEpi.
- If your laboratory does not test for norovirus, the MTPHL does provide routine diagnostic testing for norovirus in raw stool specimens.

Thank you in advance for helping improve our understanding of norovirus in Montana.

Please contact the MTPHL (1-800-821-7284) or CDEpi (406-444-0273) with any questions.

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/norovirus/reporting/calicinet/index.html>

² <https://www.cdc.gov/norovirus/worldwide.html>

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/norovirus/reporting/calicinet/data.html>