

Health threats in Tourism

Assignment 3

- 1- Explain, in no more than 750 words, one communicable disease commonly found on cruise ships. Describe its effects on tourists and the various precautions taken to prevent or control its spread.

Norovirus on Cruise Ships: What It Is and What Is Done About It

Cruise vacations are popular for getting away, having fun, seeing new sights, and enjoying a relaxing experience while traveling and eating. Unfortunately, the risk of contracting a contagious illness is one of the downsides of traveling among thousands of people in a closed space. A common disease that can be contracted while traveling on cruise ships is norovirus.

Norovirus is a stomach virus that spreads easily, particularly in settings where people share food, touch the same items, or are near one another. Symptoms include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, stomach pain, and possibly mild fever. For most people, norovirus symptoms are miserable for a couple of days and then resolve, but for older individuals or those with other health issues, complications can be severe.

Cruise ships have some of the most favorable conditions for norovirus outbreaks. Many people use the same public bathrooms, eat from the same buffets, touch the same handrails, and generally congregate in very close groups. Even one guest with norovirus can cause an outbreak on board a cruise ship. This is because norovirus is highly contagious and very durable; it can survive on surfaces for days. Therefore, it is optimal for it to spread before the outbreak is effectively controlled.

, Getting sick due to norovirus can lead to a terrible end to any tourist cruise vacation. Most people who fall ill are advised not to leave their cabin until they have been symptom-free for at least 48 hours since they may still be contagious. This means they may miss excursions, shows, meals, and time with friends or family. It can feel isolating and frustrating, particularly when you have planned for and saved for the trip for a long time.

Cruise lines recognize the issue and have strict protocols in place to prevent outbreaks. Before boarding, passengers are typically reminded to wash their hands frequently and report any

symptoms. Hand sanitizers can be found throughout the ship, particularly near food services and restrooms. However, if we are being honest, sanitizer is not always sufficient to prevent norovirus. When it comes to norovirus, handwashing with soap and water is much more effective, which is why staff is constantly reminding guests to do so.

Food service on board the ship adheres to strict policies as well. For example, buffets may have staff placing food onto plates rather than guests touching the same utensils. Where an outbreak has been established, buffets may be closed altogether. Behind the scenes, the kitchen staff is trained in food handling safety, and all food items are cleaned regularly to prevent cross-contamination.

When someone does get sick, they are often asked to isolate, with medical staff following up. Their stateroom is thoroughly cleaned, and all areas they may have been in are disinfected. Areas that often see a lot of physical contact, such as elevator buttons and railings, are also cleaned more frequently. In cases where many people are reported as sick, the cruise may be required to inform health authorities (CDC), resulting in the ship being delayed or disinfected from stem to stern before another set of guests can board.

Some may criticize the commodification of spiritual or wellness experiences. And regarding health policies on cruise ships, I feel the same. It is not a perfect system. Cruise lines must balance health and safety with guest satisfaction, and sometimes they fall short. However, overall, cruise lines are taking norovirus more seriously than at any point in time, as an outbreak is not good news for anyone, including passengers, crew, or the company.

Ultimately, the best defense as travelers is simple: wash your hands frequently, particularly after using the bathroom and before eating. Try to avoid touching your face. If you feel sick, speak up early. This may mean you stay in your room longer, but you are helping to protect everyone else.

All in all, norovirus is a reality of cruising, not an excuse not to cruise. Being aware of the risks and taking precautions to keep others and yourselves healthy can make your holiday enjoyable.