

Health Threats in Tourism Course

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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.

Ans>

Norovirus on Cruise Ships

Norovirus is the most common communicable disease found on cruise ships, often referred to as the "cruise ship virus" despite occurring in many other settings. This highly contagious pathogen causes acute gastroenteritis and can spread rapidly in the close quarters of a cruise environment.

Effects on Tourists

Norovirus typically produces symptoms within 12-48 hours of exposure. Infected tourists experience:

- Sudden onset of nausea and forceful vomiting
- Watery, non-bloody diarrhea
- Abdominal cramping and pain
- Low-grade fever and chills
- General malaise, headache, and body aches
- Dehydration (especially concerning for elderly passengers)

While extremely unpleasant, symptoms are usually self-limiting and resolve within 1-3 days. However, the illness can significantly disrupt vacation plans, confining passengers to their cabins during what should be an enjoyable experience. In severe cases, particularly among vulnerable populations like the elderly or immunocompromised, hospitalization might be required for dehydration.

Transmission Factors on Cruise Ships

Several factors make cruise ships ideal environments for norovirus transmission:

1. Close living quarters with thousands of passengers sharing facilities
2. Communal dining areas and buffets
3. Frequent touchpoints (handrails, elevator buttons, door handles)
4. New passengers embarking at different ports, potentially introducing the virus
5. The virus's ability to survive on surfaces for days and resistance to many disinfectants

Actions to Prevent and Control

Cruise ships use steps in various areas to try to avoid norovirus outbreaks.

Pre-Boarding Procedures

- A health questionnaire to discover those with gastrointestinal symptoms within the past three days
- Refusing boarding to unwell passengers or giving them the option to reschedule

Paying close attention to screening during the peak seasons for norovirus

Onboard Sanitation

- Specific disinfection methods with disinfectants that are excellent at defeating norovirus
- Regularly clean things people frequently touch.

Ships use UV lights and electrostatic sprayers in many cases these days.

- Many hand sanitizer stations are available all around the ship

Safe ways of preparing foods

Temporarily eliminating self-service buffets during the period of an outbreak

- Food service by crew to reduce transmission of germs by passengers

- Serving staff using new gloves whenever they start a new task
- Training in food safety for restaurant workers and their staff

Studying the temperature in areas where food is kept

Outbreak Response

Keep people with symptoms in their rooms for 24-48 hours after the main symptoms disappear.

Room service is available for free to people in isolation.

- Set-up centres for treatment of those with HIV
- Following up on possible outlets of infection
- Strict sanitation measures on every floor of the vessel
- Cooperating and communicating with port authority

Passenger Education

- Handwashing information for before you sail
- Reminders posted on the ships to help everyone stay clean
- Regular reminders throughout the flight asking passengers to wash their hands

Please inform your doctor if you have gastrointestinal symptoms as soon as they arise.

Overseen by Both Industry and Regulation

Companies that run cruises partner with agencies like the CDC's Vessel Sanitation Program which performs unexpected inspections and shares instructions for preventing diseases. Any ship with gastrointestinal illness affecting 3% or more of passengers or crew must make a report.

These detailed efforts are not enough to stop occasional outbreaks, as the virus is highly contagious and can be very tough to get rid of. Because of appropriate prevention, the risk and impact of outbreaks on cruise passengers have gone down each year.