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MIT warns campus about stomach virus outbreak

Posted by Matt Rocheleau December 5, 2013 05:22 PM

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By Matt Rocheleau, Boston.com Staff

An outbreak of a stomach virus is spreading around the MIT campus, school officials announced Thursday.

The campus' health center, MIT Medical, reported there is an outbreak of [acute gastroenteritis](#) and officials reminded people around campus to keep proper hygiene, particularly to make sure to regularly wash their hands.

"This may or may not be [norovirus](#)," MIT's associate medical director Howard Heller said in an [online statement](#).

Norovirus, which causes a severe and acute form of gastroenteritis, can spread quickly, especially in dense, semi-closed communities, officials said.

"But whether it's norovirus or not, our response should be the same — paying extra attention to practicing good hygiene," Heller's statement said. "Frequent and consistent hand-washing is the best way to prevent the spread of this type of virus."

Heller said the campus' medical center saw two patients with nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea at the beginning of this week, followed by 16 more during on Wednesday and a campus emergency medical technicians responded to a few more cases overnight.

As of noon on Thursday, a small number of additional patients with similar symptoms had checked into the campus' urgent care center, Heller said

Officials said the cases do not appear to be linked to any specific dorm or dining hall.

"We're continuing to look at these cases to see if we can discern any patterns, and we are ready to take any additional precautions that prove necessary," said a statement from MIT Medical's director of student health, Shawn Ferullo.

Matt Rocheleau can be reached at matthew.rocheleau@globe.com. Looking for more coverage of area colleges and universities? Go to our [Your Campus pages](#).

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