

Gastro outbreaks hit elderly hardest

2 April 2014

Frail elderly people living in residential care facilities are at increased risk of severe illness or death from outbreaks of viral gastroenteritis.

This is the finding from a study led by Craig Davis from Department of Health Queensland, published in the April issue of the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*.

"Importantly, prompt notification of outbreaks to public health units led to a much shorter duration of the outbreak," Mr Davis said.

"Notification of outbreaks to [public health](#) units should occur within 24 hours of any outbreak so that diagnostic testing and control measures can begin as soon as possible.

"A number of viruses may cause outbreaks, but norovirus is by far the most common.

"It typically causes vomiting, watery diarrhoea, nausea and abdominal cramps with symptoms such as fatigue, myalgia, headache, chills and fever.

"There is no specific treatment and no vaccine for norovirus.

"Gastro [outbreaks](#) cause a considerable burden in residential care facilities, including disruptions relating to staff absenteeism due to illness, closure of common areas to residents, cancellation of events and increased attention required to infection control.

More information: [onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/1111/\(ISSN\)1753-6405](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/1111/(ISSN)1753-6405)

Provided by Wiley

APA citation: Gastro outbreaks hit elderly hardest (2014, April 2) retrieved 21 November 2019 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-04-gastro-outbreaks-elderly-hardest.html>

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