**Norovirus Q&A**

***WHAT WE KNOW***

* The number of cadets with symptoms of norovirus has been increasing over time.
  + 82 cadets were placed on quarters on Tuesday, 12 Nov
  + 100 were placed on quarters on Wednesday, 13 Nov
  + 37 were placed on quarters on Thursday, 14 Nov
* Note that, per Lt. Col. Kevin Baldovich, 10 MDG, this decrease in cases may indicate an exposure to the infection – i.e. a group of cadets are recovering as another group is about to get sick from exposure in the next 12-48 hours. That is why the 10th Air Base Wing and all mission elements leaders within USAFA continue to monitor this situation.

***THE VIRUS***

* Symptoms begins 12-48 hours after contact with infection – immunity fades after 2 weeks
* There is no cure besides rest and plenty of fluids – a small number of cadets have been dehydrated to the point of needing and IV
* Infected individuals can remain contagious for 72 hours after symptoms clear
* Many typical cleaners, such as over the counter sanitizers and hand wipes, will NOT inhibit the spread of Norovirus – cleaning products that eliminate norovirus are *currently in use* across the wing with the proper bleach-to-water compounds.
* Alcohol based hand sanitizers are not effective at eliminating the virus – vigorous hand washing with soap and water for 20-30 seconds is key.

***WHAT WE’RE DOING ABOUT IT***

* Increased cleaning in common areas – from 1-2 times daily to at least 3 times daily.
  + Bathrooms are being cleaned with cleaning agents that are certified to eliminate the virus with the proper bleach to water to compound.
* Air Officer Commanding, those that lead cadets, are continuing to encourage good hygiene across the cadet wing
* Out of an abundance of caution, cadets are encouraged to stay away from large public gatherings if they or anyone they have been in contact with has fallen ill
* Out of an abundance of caution, several large gathering-type events have been rescheduled
* Our cadets and their loved ones are our main concern. We have acted quickly with the intervention steps mentioned above, in cooperation with our Medical group team, our cadre and leadership at all levels, and the cadet wing leadership to help stop the spread.

**Q1: What is Norovirus?**

Commonly known as the “stomach flu,” norovirus is a very contagious virus that causes vomiting and diarrhea in those who are infected.

**Q2: Is there currently an outbreak of norovirus at the Air Force Academy?**

Recent data suggests an uptick in cadets with norovirus symptoms seen by USAFA medical staff since early November. Cadet Wing leadership is aware and currently taking steps within the dormitories to contain and prevent the virus from spreading.  
  
**Q3: Is Norovirus a potentially fatal disease?**

Individuals at higher risk for severe or prolonged illness include young children, the elderly, or people with other medical illnesses such as immunosuppression. To most, no. The biggest danger to those with norovirus is dehydration. Cadets on quarantine are suggested to drink plenty of water to offset any lost fluids. The wellbeing of cadets is the upmost concern and those currently infected with the virus are under close observation by their training staff.

**Q4: Will the base close to visitors?**

If the amount of cadets sick with norovirus reaches a point which has the potential to affect the surrounding community, the decision to close the base to visitors will be made by a panel of subject matter experts.

**Q5: What is being done to stop the spread of norovirus at the Air Force Academy?**

The cadet wing has been briefed with an emphasis on personal hygiene and awareness of what causes the spread of norovirus. In addition, increased scheduled cleaning of common and high-traffic areas with appropriate cleaning agents that kill norovirus are taking place.