



Dear Members,

The Executive Office of Aging & Independence (AGE) shared the [attached guidance](#) today regarding gastrointestinal (GI) illness, recently issued by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH). They noted that the recommendations are applicable to the population served in assisted living.

The AGE message, along with the DPH communication and helpful links, are included below.

From: ALR Help (ELD) <ALRHelp@mass.gov>

Sent: Tuesday, January 13, 2026 9:51 AM

Subject: (AGE) DPH Guidance on Gastrointestinal Illness – Applicability to Assisted Living Residences (ALR)- January 13, 2026

Importance: High

Good morning,

For your awareness and reference, the Executive Office of Aging & Independence (AGE) is sharing the attached information regarding gastrointestinal (GI) illness, recently issued by the Department of Public Health (DPH) to health care facilities. The recommendations outlined by DPH are also applicable to the aging population served in Assisted Living Residences (ALR). For ease of reference, the full communication issued by DPH is included below, along with additional contextual information.

Thank you for your attention to this memo.

Sincerely,

AGE Assisted Living Certification & Compliance Unit

From: alert.network@mass.gov <alert.network@mass.gov>

Sent: Monday, January 12, 2026 4:11 PM

Subject: Important Notice: GI Illness Cluster Memo

Dear Colleagues,

Each winter, outbreaks of gastrointestinal (GI) illness, commonly caused by norovirus, occur in health care settings including long-term care facilities, assisted living residences, and hospitals. In 2025, there were 189 suspected and confirmed norovirus outbreaks reported by health care facilities in Massachusetts. This season we are already aware of numerous outbreaks. Norovirus outbreaks can result in severe morbidity, disrupt essential services, and can be difficult to control.

Norovirus is a very contagious virus that causes a sudden onset of vomiting and diarrhea. It can spread easily from one person to another in health care settings. Early recognition of symptoms and the [implementation of infection control measures](#), which should include strict adherence to hand hygiene measures, restrictions in client and staff movement and activities, and enhanced facility cleaning, are necessary to preventing spread within facilities.

Suspected norovirus outbreaks in health care facilities are reportable to the local board of health or the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) Division of Epidemiology per regulation [105 CMR 300.134](#), as well as to the facility's licensing agency.

DPH has developed a comprehensive norovirus webpage for health care facilities that is now available. It includes:

- [A norovirus fact sheet](#),
- [Guidance on reporting outbreaks](#),
- [Prevention and control recommendations](#),
- [Exclusion requirements for ill staff and volunteers](#), and
- [Other infection prevention resources](#).

The webpage can be found at: mass.gov/info-details/norovirus-information-for-health-care-facilities

We appreciate your assistance in reporting and responding to GI illness outbreaks at your facility.

Please contact the MA Bureau of Infectious Disease and Laboratory Sciences at 617-983-6800 for questions related to this communication.

Sincerely,

Catherine M. Brown, DVM, MSc, MPH

State Epidemiologist

Larry Madoff, MD

Medical Director

If you have any questions, please contact us at Mass-ALA@mass-ala.org. This update is solely for general informational purposes. It is not intended to replace a full review of the cited regulations or guidance.

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