

MEDIA RELEASE

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Advice to campers and trampers: How to avoid catching gastro

While there have been no further outbreaks of suspected norovirus since the cluster of cases among visitors to Nelson Lakes National Park, campers and trampers in the region are urged to exert caution to avoid catching the debilitating virus.

Dr Ed Kiddle, Medical Officer of Health with the Nelson Marlborough Health Public Health Service, says that the first reports of vomiting and diarrhoea came from people on the Travers Sabine circuit in the Nelson Lakes park in the first week of January.

“While the virus has not spread to other parks in the form of an outbreak, there are still residual cases of it around. People may not be aware that norovirus is a highly-infectious virus that can survive on surfaces such as basins, benches and door handles for several days,” Dr Kiddle says.

“We are urging people who have had gastro, or who have been exposed to it by friends and family, to avoid spreading it further by postponing their camping or tramping.”

Dr Kiddle says that people can be infectious for up to 48 hours after symptoms cease.

“If someone in your group has just had norovirus the incubation period until others in the family or group may get sick is usually 12 to 48 hours. People should take this into consideration when planning their holiday.”

People who are otherwise well, and who intend to enter the park should follow these preventative guidelines:

- wash hands thoroughly after using the toilet, before preparing food and before eating
- wash and dry your hands well using soap and water and, ideally, follow this with hand sanitiser
- prepare for the worst: pack paper towels, soap and hand sanitiser. Consider packing a small bottle of bleach.

People who fall ill while they are tramping or camping should:

- isolate themselves as much as possible and consider going home to recover. You can be infectious for up to two days after symptoms cease.
- avoid preparing food for others
- avoid vomiting in sinks or shared basins/surfaces. The toilet is the best place.
- report illness to campground or DOC staff
- clean up vomit or excretia using gloves (if available), detergent and hot water followed by bleach (household bleach diluted 1part bleach to 10 parts water).

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