

By [Gene Sloan](#), USA TODAY

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Princess Cruises has ordered an early end to a Caribbean cruise that has been marred by an outbreak of gastrointestinal illness. The line today announced that the 3,080-passenger Crown Princess is returning to its home port of Ft. Lauderdale, which it departed on Saturday, and will undergo an extensive, two-day sanitization.

The line said it made the decision to end the cruise early in consultation with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention after 114 passengers and 59 crew



CAPTION

By Laura Bly, USA TODAY

members on the sailing became ill,

continuing an outbreak that began last week on the ship's previous sailing. Nearly 400 passengers and crew on the earlier sailing became ill.

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"We sincerely regret having to cut short our passengers' cruise vacations because of this highly unusual situation," the line says in a statement.

Symptoms of the illness include vomiting and diarrhea, and the line says it is believed to be norovirus -- a common, easily spread and fast moving gastrointestinal illness that affects millions of Americans each year.

Sometimes called the "24-hour flu" even though it is unrelated to influenza, norovirus is the leading cause of gastrointestinal illness in the United States, accounting for about half of all cases, according to the CDC. It breaks out regularly in schools, nursing homes, hospitals, offices and other places people congregate.

Princess says it will offer full refunds to the 3,078 passengers on this week's cruise and also help them arrange early flights home from Ft. Lauderdale. The line also is providing hotel accommodations for affected passengers, if necessary, and will give all passengers a 25% future cruise credit.

Princess notes the Crown Princess was given a thorough cleaning on Saturday in Fort Lauderdale after its last cruise that was overseen by the CDC. The longer, two-day disinfection of the ship planned this week will be assisted by additional cleaning crews and will include multiple sanitizations of cabins, the line says.

The ship will resume its regular schedule starting on Saturday.