

Directors of Education

For the attention of Head Teachers

Date 28/11/2017
Our Ref HPT/LD
Enquiries to Health Protection
Extension 35420 / 35422
Direct Line 0131 465 5420 / 5422
Email: Health.Protection@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk

Dear Head Teachers,

NOROVIRUS ADVICE LETTER WINTER 2017-2018

In recent years we have seen a large number of Norovirus outbreaks in schools and nurseries during the winter months and these have caused service disruption, cancellation of activities like nativity plays and trips, staff shortages, school closures and many pupils being absent from class. Since the summer holidays in 2017 we have seen 5 schools affected.

Norovirus is very infectious and high numbers of children and staff can be affected at once. The symptoms of norovirus include sudden onset of nausea followed by projectile vomiting and/or diarrhoea and usually last 12 to 60 hours. A person can become infected as a result of contact with an infectious case, contact with a surface contaminated with the virus or ingesting contaminated food or drink.

We would like to remind you of the importance of being prepared and vigilant for norovirus outbreaks as prompt action prevents spread of the virus and reduces the number of people becoming ill. You may wish to ensure that you have an outbreak plan in place and practise how you would deal with an outbreak.

If you identify a suspected outbreak of diarrhoea and/or vomiting in your nursery or school, it is important that you notify NHS Lothian's Health Protection Team (Tel: 0131 465 5420 / 5422 in working hours or out of hours on 0131 242 1000). Advice and support will be provided in order to try and control the outbreak.

Please have the above contact numbers clearly displayed/available for key staff to access. The next page of this letter can be used as an information guide for staff in the event of a suspected outbreak.



Norovirus Infection Control Advice for Schools and Nurseries Winter 2017-18

Vital infection control measures for the initial management of an outbreak include:-

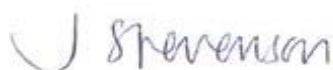
- 1. Thorough hand washing is the simplest and most important infection control measure.** Please advise that all children and staff wash their hands frequently using warm water and soap, especially after using the toilet and before eating and preparing food. Alcohol hand gels/rubs are not effective against norovirus. Liquid soap via a soap dispenser should be made available and there should be a plentiful supply of paper towels. Younger nursery pupils may require supervision.
- 2. Environmental cleaning and closure of affected area:** Robust environmental cleaning immediately after any contamination by diarrhoea or vomit is vital to contain the spread of the virus. Close the area where the contamination has occurred until it has been properly cleaned to reduce spread. The frequency of toilet cleaning and frequently touched surfaces (e.g. flush and door handles) should be increased, e.g. clean after each break time and after a child has been sick or had diarrhoea.
- 3. Prompt exclusion** of affected children and staff until they have been symptom free for 48 hours. Affected children should be isolated from their class mates until collected by their parents/carer.
- 4. Personal protective equipment:** Disposable aprons and gloves should be worn when cleaning the environment, cleaning and disinfecting potties, changing nappies, toileting a child or cleaning up vomit or diarrhoea. Staff should wash their hands after the removal of gloves or aprons.
- 5. Staff and pupil movements** between classrooms and joint class activities in school, e.g. assembly should be restricted.
- 6. Cancellation of trips and events.** The advice for schools and nurseries with an outbreak of norovirus is to cancel any trips outwith the school, and to keep the number of visitors to the school to a minimum. Unfortunately in the past this has meant cancelling major school events.
- 7. Deep cleaning of school premises** needs to be timely and effective. If cleaning is delayed it can lead to increased risk of disease transmission and unnecessary school closure. Environmental cleaning with bleach diluted to 1:1000 is recommended as the most effective way to destroy the virus. It may be beneficial to devise your own deep clean procedure, identifying the appropriate personnel, contractors and other resources necessary to do this. The HPT can advise on appropriate deep cleaning procedures.

The City Of Edinburgh Council have a helpful Norovirus Toolkit for schools. The City of Edinburgh Council would be happy to share this toolkit with health and safety teams in other local areas. Please contact Kimberley Campbell on 0131 529 4222 or email kimberley.campbell@edinburgh.gov.uk

The Health Protection Team will advise on any further measures that may need to be taken. The decision to close an establishment will be taken in discussion with the Local Authority Environmental Health Officer, the head teacher and the Health Protection Team. However, closure is usually only necessary in rare circumstances.

If you require any further information, please contact the NHS Lothian Health Protection Team.

Yours Sincerely



DR JANET STEVENSON
CONSULTANT IN PUBLIC HEALTH MEDICINE



LINDSEY MURPHY
LEAD HEALTH PROTECTION NURSE

Useful guidance documents:

- Information on the best way to wash hands and on getting children's handwashing packs is available on the website: <http://www.washyourhandsofthem.com/home.aspx>
- E-bug is an online learning site to learn about microbes: <http://www.e-bug.eu/>
- Infection Prevention and Control in Childcare Settings (Day Care and Childminding Settings) <http://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/haic/ic/guidelinedetail.aspx?id=47103>
- NHS Health Scotland campaign materials can be accessed here: <http://www.healthscotland.com/resources/campaigns/norovirus.aspx>

Health Protection Contact Details:

Telephone: 0131 465 5420 / 465 5422
Health.Protection@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk