



To: All schools and early years' settings

Dear colleagues

Norovirus season 2017/18

We are writing ahead of the approaching norovirus season, to ask for your help this winter, to reduce the spread of norovirus. We hope the following points help to minimise the risk of outbreaks in your establishment. We are also writing to GPs, district nurses, pharmacists, nurseries and childcare establishments and others.

Norovirus causes viral gastroenteritis, which is characterised by the sudden onset of vomiting and/or diarrhoea, it can spread rapidly in closed environments such as schools, childcare settings, hospitals and nursing homes. However, most people do not require treatment and recover at home within one or two days.

Norovirus is easily transmitted from person to person and by consuming contaminated food or water or by contact with contaminated surfaces or objects. Soap and water should be readily available.

If someone in your establishment develops symptoms of norovirus, please help avoid spread by following this advice.

Children and staff with symptoms of norovirus should:

- Stay away from work or school until they have been **free of symptoms for at least 48 hours** and avoid contact with others where possible.
- Keep hydrated by drinking fluids as tolerated
- If symptoms persist (more than 48 hours), phone the GP or the NHS non-emergency number 111 for advice.
- Encourage staff and students to wash hands thoroughly with soap and water regularly but particularly after toilet visits and before eating and handling food. **Alcohol hand gel is not effective against norovirus**
- Do not visit friends or relatives in hospital or residential care homes as there is a real risk of introducing the infection to the establishment
- Do not handle or prepare food for other people until symptom free for at least 48 hours.
- Exclude ill children and staff from school trips and residential trips, consider postponing during an outbreak.

You can also use the Public Health England e-Bug resources for schools. Download fun and interactive lessons for primary and secondary schools from <http://www.e-bug.eu/>, to educate your students on the importance of good hand and respiratory hygiene.

Environmental decontamination

- Clean then disinfect frequent contact surfaces such as toilets at least daily and when contaminated, using a chlorine-releasing product that is active against viruses e.g. sodium hypochlorite, such as Milton, 0.1% solution or 1000ppm available chlorine
- Increase frequency of environmental decontamination during outbreaks
- Wash soiled clothing and fabrics on the hottest wash the material will withstand
- Avoid sand and water play during outbreaks

Reporting outbreaks and clusters

If you suspect an outbreak of diarrhoea and vomiting or notice an increase in the number of cases being reported please do not hesitate to call your local Public Health England (PHE) Centre Health Protection Team (HPT) on Tel: **0300 303 8162 Option 1 (Health Protection), then Option 2 for SW(North) HPT**. This will help us monitor what's happening in the community and enables PHE to provide specific advice to minimise further spread.

We attach a letter template that you may want to consider for parents, guardians and carers as well as staff members if you have norovirus in your establishment.

If you have any queries about this letter please contact your PHE Centre. Your support in helping to avoid further spread in the community by promoting the following advice would be greatly appreciated.

We thank you for your co-operation.

Yours faithfully



Director of Public Health

Dr Bruce Laurence

Director of Public Health



Public Health England
Deputy Director of Health Protection

Mr Michael Wade

Public Health England
Deputy Director of Health Protection