



Public Health
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health

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TO: All Schools in Cumbria & Lancashire

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Dear Colleague

NOROVIRUS SEASON

We are writing to highlight that we are beginning to experience the seasonal increase in outbreaks of diarrhoea and vomiting caused by norovirus ("norovirus season"). In recent years we have seen an increasing number of norovirus outbreaks and these cause considerable difficulties throughout the community. We are therefore writing to ask for your assistance and to remind you of the importance of being vigilant for diarrhoea and vomiting (D&V) episodes/outbreaks.

We need your help with preventing and controlling outbreaks in schools

Early recognition of diarrhoea and/or vomiting outbreaks in schools is vital so that effective control measures can be put in place. Thorough hand washing with liquid soap and water, environmental cleaning and prompt exclusion of affected children or staff, are vital infection control measures during an outbreak of D&V within a school. Children or staff with D&V should not return to school until they have been **symptom free for 48 hours**.

An information leaflet about norovirus is enclosed with this letter. If you have any queries, or need advice during a diarrhoea and/or vomiting outbreak, please do not hesitate to call the Cumbria & Lancashire Health Protection Team on 0344 225 0562 opt 2.

Yours sincerely

Dr Nicola Schinaia
Consultant in Health Protection



Food hygiene

Food that the ill person may have prepared whilst symptomatic should be disposed of.

If the food is to be cooked and then served hot it should be safe **but** salads, fruit and other cold dishes not receiving further cooking have a risk of being contaminated with the virus and making others ill.

If the person has vomited in the food handling area then it **must** be thoroughly cleaned up (see below) and all horizontal surfaces washed with detergent and hot water and then sanitised using a hypochlorite bleach solution (1000ppm) or a combined detergent / hypochlorite cleaning product.

Symptomatic people should **not** prepare or handle food for others until they have been completely free of symptoms **for 48 hours** (this includes nausea).

**Further information on norovirus can be obtained from
the Infection Prevention and Control Team in your Local Authority
or
your local Health Protection Team in Public Health England North West**

Information produced by: Public Health England North West

NOROVIRUS

An information leaflet for health and social care staff

What is Norovirus?

Norovirus, also called small round structured virus (SRSV) or Norwalk-like virus (NLV), is a common source of gastro-enteritis.

The illness caused is often known as 'winter vomiting disease'. Although it is true that there is an increase in winter months, unfortunately, cases do occur in all seasons.

The illness characteristically starts with the **sudden onset** of severe and dramatic vomiting. This can occur with such force that it is termed 'projectile'. Some people also develop diarrhoea.

In general the symptoms usually last for about 24 – 48 hours after which the person feels lethargic/ 'washed out' for a day or so.

There are no long-term effects of norovirus infection and, even in the frail or elderly, most people will make a full recovery within 48 hours.

Antibiotic treatment has **no** effect upon norovirus infection.

Norovirus is **highly infectious** and may be caught:

- By direct contact with an infected person especially their vomit or diarrhoea e.g. being close to a person when they vomit or when cleaning up after them.
- from food that has been prepared by someone with the virus
- From food contaminated by virus from someone with symptoms e.g. fruit at a bedside.
- From food that was contaminated at source, such as oysters, from sewage polluted sea.
- Via flat surfaces that have been contaminated with virus after someone has vomited in the vicinity, as the virus can survive in the environment for some time, possibly days.
- By breathing in and swallowing the virus that is in the air around someone who has just vomited, or from a person who is incubating norovirus infection.
- Once a person has been exposed to the virus if they get infected it usually takes between 12 and 48 hours for them to become ill.
- Norovirus is **not** caught from animals.

Looking after someone who is ill with norovirus

The person who is ill with norovirus should stay at home and not go to work, school etc. until they have been **completely free from symptoms for 48 hours** (this includes nausea).

Drinking fluids should be encouraged, especially in children and elderly people to prevent dehydration.

To control the spread of the virus, good hand hygiene, cleanliness of the environment and good food hygiene are essential.

Hand Hygiene

Everyone should regularly wash & dry their hands especially:

- Before:**
- preparing or serving food
 - eating meals
- After:**
- contact with a sick person and their surroundings i.e. sick room, bedding, clothing & equipment
 - going to the toilet &/or assisting a sick person to go to the toilet
 - leaving the area where the person has vomited or had diarrhoea

Environmental hygiene

Both diarrhoea and vomit are highly infectious so care is needed when dealing with them.

Cleaning up vomit &/or diarrhoea:

Protect yourself by wearing CE marked disposable gloves and a polythene disposable apron.

Soak up any liquid with paper towels or kitchen tissue and dispose of appropriately.

Scoop up the solid mess and flush down the toilet if possible.

The area should then be thoroughly washed with detergent and hot water followed by a good quality chlorine based (hypochlorite) bleach solution made to British Standard

Take special care to dilute any bleach as instructed by the manufacturer & **never mix** different types of chemical as the fumes can be dangerous.

Store bleach safely and ensure that children do **not** have access to these solutions.

Once cleaned, the area should be rinsed with clean water and allowed to dry.

After cleaning vomit or diarrhoea from carpets it is best to clean the area with a proprietary carpet shampoo or steam cleaner, if available. In the absence of this type of equipment a thorough cleaning with hot water and detergent will suffice. Always rinse with clean water and allow to dry before using the area again.

Horizontal surfaces in the vicinity of the vomit should be cleaned with hot soapy water, rinsed & dried.

After cleaning, dispose of the apron, gloves & cleaning cloths in the appropriate refuse bin.

When finished always wash and dry your hands.

Cleaning toilets and basins

Disposable gloves and polythene apron should be worn, and use detergent and hot water to clean the following at least twice a day **and** after every use by an infected person, in the following order:

- Wash-hand basin taps
- Toilet door handles
- Flush handles
- Toilet seats

Cloths, gloves & aprons used for cleaning must be disposed of in the appropriate refuse bin.

When finished always wash and dry your hands.

Care of soiled articles

If urinals and bedpans are used, the carer should wear CE marked disposable gloves and a disposable apron when attending the patient.

Bedpans and urinals should be emptied into the toilet bowl and then washed with detergent and hot water, rinsed and allowed to dry.

Soiled clothing and bed linen should be washed separately in a washing machine on a 'hot cycle'.

If the soiling is very heavy, flush away as much as possible into the toilet bowl. Take care as rough handling may cause the virus to float into the air, be swallowed / inhaled and cause further infection.

After loading, the outer surfaces of the washing machine should be cleaned with detergent & hot water. This is especially important if the machine is where children are likely to play.

When finished always wash and dry your hands.