

Norovirus

Description

Norovirus is a gastroenteritis illness that affects the stomach, and easily causes outbreaks in groups or settings such as early childhood centres.

Norovirus causes vomiting (sometimes projectile) and sometimes diarrhoea (runny poos), abdominal (tummy) and muscle pain and slight fever. These symptoms last for 24 to 48 hours.

How does it spread?

Norovirus is spread by hands that come into contact with poos during nappy changing or helping a child use the toilet. From the hands it can spread to surfaces, toys, or food.

Norovirus can spread through the air when a person vomits. It can also spread through the air when the toilet is flushed after a person with norovirus has used it.

Infectious period

A person with norovirus are infectious from the moment they begin feeling sick until at least three days after they are well.

When a person is infected with norovirus the symptoms will usually start after 24 – 48 hours, but can be from 10 – 50 hours.

Exclusion period

A child or teacher with norovirus needs to stay home until they have been free of vomiting and diarrhoea for **at least 48 hours**.

Responsibilities of staff

- Tell parents that a child at the centre has norovirus.
- Display information about norovirus on your notice board.
- Make sure all teachers, children and babies wash and dry their hands thoroughly after nappy change, toileting and before eating or handling food and infant formula bottles. Uncooked foods such as fruit, crackers etc. can easily become contaminated by unwashed hands.
- Make sure that children wash their hands after nappy change if they are able to, and help children who can not wash their hands properly.
- Wash all toys and surfaces with hot soapy water, and then disinfect with 1:10 dilute bleach (1 part bleach and 9 parts water).
- Wash smaller toys in the dishwasher.
- Remove play dough, art and water-play until there are no more cases of norovirus.
- If you are cleaning up vomit or poos use 1:10 bleach, wear a mask, apron and gloves. Be aware of what you touch when wearing gloves to avoid contaminating the surrounding area.
- Steam clean carpets if vomit or poos has contaminated them. The steam-cleaning will kill the virus.

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When should a centre be more concerned?

The following bullet points suggest your centre has an outbreak:

- 15% or higher absenteeism of your total roll (including staff) or most of the ill children are in one area of the centre (e.g. under two areas). Click [here](#) to download a copy of the illness register.
- The children and/or staff all got sick at the same time or after a particular event (e.g. a party, event held at the centre, petting zoo visit).
- The number of ill children and/or staff doubles in a short timeframe.
- Children and/or staff have bloody diarrhoea.
- A child has been in hospital due to vomiting or diarrhoea.

If any of the above are happening in your centre please contact a health protection officer by email healthprotection@hutvalleydhb.org.nz or phone 04 570 9002.

If you have an outbreak please ask all parents to wash their hands when arriving at the centre. If this is not practicable have adults use antiseptic alcohol-based hand sanitiser before entering or leaving the centre. Children and teachers should wash and dry their hands with soap and water on arriving and leaving the centre. Hand sanitisers are an addition to handwashing and should not be used as an ‘instead of’ hand washing.

Responsibilities of parents

- Keep your child at home until they have been free of vomiting and diarrhoea for at least 48 hours.
- Make sure all family members are washing and drying their hands properly. Use liquid soap and dry them thoroughly.
- **The child sick with norovirus should not share towels with the rest of the family.**

There is no treatment for norovirus but it is important to make sure your child has enough fluid.

If a child is vomiting or has diarrhoea they will lose a lot of nutrients and fluids. It is important to give them frequent, small drinks (consider using a syringe to give fluids).

The best option is to dilute some fruit juice or cordial in water (1 part juice to 5 parts water).

