

Control measures for gastroenteritis outbreaks in institutions

General

- Inform National Public Health Service – Wellington Region by calling (04) 570 9002. Keep a record of resident and staff illness by completing an illness register. A template form will be provided to you.
- Follow your usual procedures for the clinical management of individual residents and refer to your infection control manual for information.
- Keep staff and residents families informed of the situation. This can be done at staff handover time and by posting signs at the door and front desk of the rest home. We can provide you with a notice.

Exclusion recommendations

- Isolate those who are symptomatic e.g., ensure sick residents stay in their rooms. You may consider designating separate rooms and facilities (toilets, showers) for sick and well residents where possible.
- Residents who have been unwell should not participate in communal activities until they have been symptom free for at least 48 hours.
- Restrict general visitors where possible.
- Restrict visiting of residents between the sick and well areas.
- Staff who are symptomatic should not return to work until they have been symptom free for 48 hours.
- Cleaners should not have contact with sick residents (i.e. not to venture from a sick persons room into a well persons room.)
- Where possible, staff who have been sick and return to work should nurse symptomatic residents. This is because these staff should have immunity.
- Residents who have had diarrhoea or vomiting should not swim in communal pools for two weeks post completion of their illness.

Handwashing

- Frequent hand washing must be emphasised to staff, residents and visitors.
- Hands must be washed before and after contact with sick residents.
- Consider using alcohol sanitizers where there is difficulty accessing wash hand basins.
- Dishwashing staff should wear durable gloves whilst handling dishes

Staff

- Gloves and disposable aprons should be worn and changed frequently and disposed of when leaving a sick persons room.
- Minimise multi-tasking of staff. Food handlers, caregivers, cleaners and laundry staff should be separate jobs.
- Hand washing before handling food/drinks is essential.

Cleaning

- Use disposable cleaning cloths.
- Any vomit or diarrhoea spills should be cleaned with a 10% bleach solution for hard surfaces, and other appropriate cleaners for carpet surfaces.
- Increase the frequency of all cleaning using 10% bleach solution. Toilet and shower areas and general surfaces used by unwell residents (e.g., handrails, bench tops) should be cleaned at least twice a day.
- Clean and sanitize toilets after use of a sick resident.
- Cleaners should avoid contact with residents.

Other

- If residents or staff require transfer to another institution or hospital let the receiving institution know PRIOR to transfer about the presence of norovirus.

Further information

Further information and advice is available by phoning National Public Health Service – Wellington Region on (04) 570 9002 or by visiting our website at www.rph.org.nz/gastroenteritis.