

Control Recommendations for Gastrointestinal Illness Outbreaks in Child Care Programs

The following control measures should be implemented during a gastrointestinal illness outbreak, often caused by norovirus, in a child care setting to prevent further transmission:

Wash hands

- Educate staff and students on proper handwashing: use soap and warm running water for 20 seconds. Hand sanitizer does not work well against norovirus.
 - [MDPH Handwashing Posters](#)
 - [CDC About Hand Hygiene in Schools and Early Care and Educational Settings](#)
- Monitor young children to ensure adequate handwashing upon arrival to the child care program, before eating or feeding, after diapering or toileting, and before participating in shared sensory or water tables.
- Educate staff to wash hands frequently, especially after handling diapers, before preparing food or feeding, before eating, and before taking or administering medicine.

Clean

- Ensure staff are aware of special cleaning considerations for norovirus.
 - [CDC Clean Up After Someone with Norovirus Vomits or has Diarrhea](#)
 - [University of Minnesota Extension's Norovirus Step-by-step Cleanup of Vomit and Diarrhea](#)
- Ensure cleaning products being used are effective against norovirus.
 - [EPA's Registered Antimicrobial Products Effective Against Norovirus](#)
- Clean and sanitize high-touch surfaces and objects such as countertops, tables, doorknobs, toys, faucet handles, etc. at least daily and when soiled.
- Clean and disinfect diapering areas and potty chairs after each use, and bathroom toilets and sinks at least daily and when soiled.

Exclude

- Exclude staff and children with gastrointestinal illness symptoms such as vomiting or diarrhea in accordance with the **MDPH Gastrointestinal Illness Symptom Checklist for Children and Staff in Child Care Programs and K-12 Schools**.

Limit opportunities for transmission

- Ensure staff are aware of the rapid onset of norovirus and have receptacles to provide children who have a sudden onset of vomiting in the classroom or other areas of the facility.
- If possible, group staff who worked with sick children in the same classroom or area to limit spread to unaffected classrooms.
- Consider cancelling or postponing group activities.
- Limit the mixing of children and staff from different classrooms, especially classrooms with illness and those without illness.
- Limit sharing of items (e.g., toys or books) among children within a classroom, and across classrooms.
- Restrict the sharing of food among children and staff.

Notify

- Notify parents/guardians when cases of suspected or confirmed norovirus infection occur in children or staff. Licensed child care facilities must notify all parents/guardians in accordance with MDPH recommendations when any communicable disease or condition has been introduced into the program (606 CMR 7.11). Sample notification letters are available from the Division of Epidemiology at (617) 983-6800.

Control Recommendations for Gastrointestinal Illness Outbreaks in K-12 Schools

The following control measures should be implemented during a gastrointestinal illness outbreak, often caused by norovirus, in a K-12 school setting to prevent further transmission:

Wash hands

- Educate staff and students on proper handwashing: use soap and warm running water for 20 seconds. Hand sanitizer does not work well against norovirus.
 - [MDPH Handwashing Posters](#)
 - [CDC About Hand Hygiene in Schools and Early Care and Educational Settings](#)
- Enforce strict handwashing policies for students and staff. Handwashing should occur after using the restroom or helping students in the restroom, before eating or handling food, and before taking or administering medicine.
- Have staff supervise handwashing of younger students.

Clean

- Ensure staff are aware of special cleaning considerations for norovirus.
 - [CDC Clean Up After Someone with Norovirus Vomits or has Diarrhea](#)
 - [University of Minnesota Extension's Norovirus Step-by-step Cleanup of Vomit and Diarrhea](#)
- Ensure cleaning product(s) effective against norovirus are used throughout the school.
 - [EPA's Registered Antimicrobial Products Effective Against Norovirus](#)
- Clean and sanitize high-touch surfaces such as desks, countertops, doorknobs, computer keyboards, hands-on learning items, faucet handles, etc. at least daily and when soiled.
- Clean and disinfect bathroom toilets and sinks at least daily and when soiled.

Exclude

- Exclude staff and children with gastrointestinal illness symptoms such as vomiting or diarrhea in accordance with the **MDPH Gastrointestinal Illness Symptom Checklist for Children and Staff in Child Care Programs and K-12 Schools**.

Limit opportunities for exposure

- Ensure all staff are aware of the rapid onset of norovirus and have receptacles to provide children who have a sudden onset of vomiting in the classroom or other areas of the school.
- Consider cancelling or postponing group activities such as communal meals, sporting events, or social/recreational groups.
- Restrict sharing of food, stop the use of self-service in cafeterias, and consider switching to single-use dining materials if reusable ones cannot be promptly and thoroughly cleaned.
- Reduce the mingling of children and staff across classrooms.

Notify

- Consider notifying parents/guardians during suspected or confirmed outbreaks of norovirus. The local board of health or an MDPH epidemiologist can help determine whether notification is recommended, and sample letters are available from the Division of Epidemiology at (617) 983-6800.