



Guidance on managing outbreaks of norovirus in schools and nurseries

Norovirus, also called the 'winter vomiting bug', is a stomach bug that causes vomiting and diarrhoea. It can be very unpleasant, but usually goes away in about 2 days. Symptoms start suddenly, within 1-2 days of being infected.

Main symptoms of norovirus:

- nausea – feeling sick
- vomiting – being sick
- diarrhoea

A person may also have:

- a raised temperature
- a headache
- aching arms and legs

How contagious is norovirus?

Did you know?
It only takes contact with
18 norovirus particles
to catch the virus
#ThinkNORO

The number of norovirus particles able to fit on a pinhead is enough to infect more than
100,000
people
#ThinkNORO

- **Norovirus outbreak definition:** a greater than expected rate of infection compared with the usual background rate for the place and time where the outbreak has occurred
- **Response:** follow your local arrangements for reporting outbreaks

How norovirus is spread

- **Close contact:** contact with someone infected with norovirus
- **Contaminated surfaces:** touching infected surfaces or objects, then touching your mouth
- **Contaminated food:** eating food prepared or handled by someone with norovirus

How to limit spread of norovirus

- **Good hand hygiene:** especially after going to the toilet and before eating or preparing food. Alcohol-based gels are not effective against norovirus – use liquid soap and water
- **Exclusion:** staff and pupils with norovirus symptoms should not attend school until they have been free of symptoms for 48 hours
- **Adequate supplies:** make sure you have adequate supplies of vomit bags in all areas and that these are accessible to staff and pupils
- **Isolating affected areas:** if a child vomits in the classroom, section the area off and ensure it is not used until fully deep cleaned – cleaning guidance is available in the [Health protection in children and young people settings, including education](#) information online
- **Isolating individuals:** the affected child should be isolated, if possible, from their classmates until collected by their parent/guardian
- **Increase cleaning of touch points:** cleaning guidance is available online in the information on [Health protection in children and young people settings, including education](#)
- **Diarrhoea and vomiting checklist:** use the action checklist on the [Children and young people settings: tools and resources](#)

Reporting an outbreak of norovirus to UKHSA

Call the **UKHSA West Midlands Health Protection Team** on **0344 225 3560, Option 2**

What UKHSA will ask for:

- **Setting:** name and address, including postcode
- **Contact person:** name and phone number and email
- **Type of setting:** for example, nursery or special educational needs (SEN) school
- **Total numbers affected:** children, young people and staff (including non-teaching staff)
- **Food handlers:** if any food handlers have been affected
- **Total numbers attending** children, young people, and staff
- **Areas affected:** number of classes, rooms year groups (including nursery if applicable)
- **Symptoms:** list of all symptoms experienced
- **Onset:** date when symptoms started, including brief overview of sequence of numbers of new cases since first (index) case
- **Episodes of illness:** have any staff/children vomited or had diarrhoea within the setting
- **Severity:** any indications of severe disease, such as overnight admissions to hospital
- **Events or trips:** details of any events or trips in the week prior to the start of the outbreak
- **Testing:** if any tests or clinical assessments have taken place (if known)
- **Clinically vulnerable:** if there are any individuals within the affected group at higher risk from severe disease (eg chronic conditions, suppressed immunity, pregnant staff)

National guidance

National guidance [Health protection in children and young people settings, including education](#) is available online at GOV.UK. The following are links to individual chapters, for ease of reading:

1	Infections in childcare settings	Infections
2	Preventing and controlling infections (includes cleaning guidance)	Prevention and control
3	Guidance for handwashing	How to wash your hands – NHS Hand hygiene poster
4	e-Bug resources	e-bug
5	Managing outbreaks and incidents	Advice for all outbreaks
6	Specific educational settings and populations – additional considerations	Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Early years or pre-school• Special Educational Needs (SEN)• Residential educational settings
7	Children and young people settings – tools and resources	Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exclusion table• Posters• Diarrhoea and vomiting outbreak – action checklist• Meningitis or septicaemia – action checklist

See our online blog – [Norovirus: What to do if you catch it and helping to stop the spread](#)

You can also look at the [norovirus information on the NHS website](#) or visit [NHS111 online](#)