

Recommendations for Controlling an Outbreak of Viral Gastroenteritis in Schools and Child Care Facilities

You can take steps to limit the spread of viruses that cause gastroenteritis, most commonly Norovirus. The following document can be used as guidance to increase standard infection control and cleaning activities during gastrointestinal illness outbreaks, specifically those due to Norovirus. Specific recommendations may be made by the Board of Health that may not be included in the document. All recommendations should be followed as appropriate. Please ensure all staff are educated and held accountable for enhanced infection control and cleaning recommendations.

I. General Recommendations: (Immediately call the District Epidemiologist or Public Health Nurse Specialist when two or more children and/or staff begin experiencing vomiting and/or diarrhea within a three-day period. This might indicate the start of an outbreak. (Georgia law requires the reporting of all outbreaks to public health.) Remain in close contact with the epidemiologist throughout the outbreak investigation.

- A. Increase the frequency of hand washing!
1. Ensure children, teachers, and other employees are washing their hands:
 - a. Before eating
 - b. Before preparing food, drinks, or bottles for others
 - c. Before dispensing medication
 - d. After using the bathroom
 - e. After changing diapers
 - f. After cleaning
 - g. After handling dirty dishes
 - h. After smoking, eating, or drinking
 2. Monitor young children to ensure hand washing is adequate and properly done.
 3. Maintain hand washing vigilance through active reminders (signs) and corrections.
- B. Insure strict glove use policy for all food preparation, ready-to-eat foods, and for handling eating utensils (including silverware, plates, and glasses). Ensure that gloves are changed frequently and that hands are washed between glove changes.
- C. Inspect the playground, parking lot and surrounding areas for evidence of public biohazardous accidents. Handle any positive findings as outlined under section IV.

II. Basic Clean-up / Sanitization Recommendations:

- A. Using an approved virucidal agent*, frequently clean and sanitize high-touch areas such as:
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|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| • toilet seats | • sinks |
| • toilet railings | • thermostats |
| • toilet knobs | • remote controls |
| • bathroom door locks | • classroom tables |
| • drinking fountains | • stair rails |
| • changing tables | • balcony/mezzanine rails |
| • door knobs, handles, or push plates | • drawer handles |
| • telephones | • markers/pens/pencils |
| • elevator buttons and panels | • toys |
| • light switches | |
- B. Increase the frequency of cleaning and sanitizing the handles of hand sinks and doors in all restrooms, classrooms, and eating areas to at least once per hour during periods of frequent use.

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- C. In potty training classrooms, clean toilets between each use.
- D. Use disposable cleaning cloths. Use new cloths for each room. Use separate colored cloths in toilet areas.
- E. Clean and sanitize (using an approved virucidal agent*) floors daily, but do not buff floors until further notice. Buffing the floors during an outbreak situation can re-aerosolize the virus and increase the likelihood of transmission.
- F. Remove and dispose of bags from vacuum cleaners between uses. Do not vacuum fecal or vomit accidents. (See section IV)
- G. If applicable, discard the ice in all ice machines once per followed by thorough cleaning and sanitizing of the machine.

III. Recommendations for Illness Surveillance

- A. Require that all children and employees who report having experienced vomiting, diarrhea, or “stomach flu” symptoms remain home from school for a minimum of 48 hours after their symptoms end. (Food-handlers should remain home from work until symptom-free for at least 72 hours.) Thorough and frequent hand washing and no hand contact with ready-to-eat foods are essential for these employees as some individuals may shed the virus for weeks after infection.
- B. Have teachers monitor their classrooms for obvious signs of illness and send ill children home promptly.
- C. Maintain a log of ill students and staff as requested by the Board of Health to monitor the outbreak.
- D. Have a flexible “sick leave” policy that allows teachers to stay home when they or their children are ill.

IV. Vomitus and Feces Removal, and Follow-up Contact Surface Clean-up and Sanitization

- A. Consideration should be given to have a specially trained cleaning team available at all times. Ensure that all (potentially) biohazardous accidents are only remediated by staff trained and properly protected for such clean-up activities.
- B. Have staff report all biohazardous accidents to management. Treat all fecal and vomitus events as if they are contaminated with a highly infectious organism. Document all biohazardous events in a log including date, time, location, including room number, persons affected, and clean-up personnel if known.
- C. In the event of an accident (either emetic/vomiting or fecal), the area must be cleaned as a matter of urgency. The area where such an incident has occurred should be closed, or cordoned off, for at least one hour and all windows opened to allow thorough air circulation.
- D. Individuals who clean up vomitus or feces should use the following procedures:
 - Wear disposable mask, gloves, eye shield, and plastic disposable apron.
 - Use paper towels to soak up excess liquid. Transfer these and all solid waste directly into a plastic bag.
 - Clean the soiled area with detergent and hot water, using disposable cloths.
 - Disinfect the contaminated area with a virucidal agent*. In cases of vomit, the contaminated area is the area within at least a 25 foot radius of the incident.
 - Dispose of apron, gloves, and cloths into a biohazard waste bag.
 - Wash hands thoroughly after completing the clean-up procedure and again after completing the disposal procedure.
 - If the soiled area is carpeted, then steam clean using a virucidal agent* in the reservoir for the cleaning solution.

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- E. Soiled mattresses and soft furnishings should be removed for sanitization using a virucidal agent* and subsequent steam cleaning. If soiling on a mattress exceeds one quart in volume, treat the mattress in place, wrap the mattress in heavy gauge plastic and have the mattress sterilized, or in the alternative, discard via normal solid waste disposal procedures.
- F. Contaminated carpets should be cleaned with a carpet detergent and hot water, then disinfected with a virucidal agent*, and then steam cleaned (also using a virucidal agent*).
- G. Contaminated hard surfaces should be washed with detergent and hot water using a disposable cloth, then disinfected with a virucidal agent*. Cloths should be disposed of as biohazardous waste. Non-disposable mop heads should be washed in hot water using a virucidal agent*.
- H. Horizontal surfaces, furniture, and soft furnishings in the vicinity of the soiled area should be cleaned with detergent and hot water using disposable cloths and sanitized using a virucidal agent*. Follow this with air-drying in the sun for a few hours (if possible.)
- I. If the accident is in a food preparation or food service area:
 - Using the above principles, carefully remove all vomit and clean the area.
 - Thoroughly clean and sanitize all food contact surfaces frequently with a virucidal agent* approved for food contact surfaces. Follow this action with a thorough rinse with clean water and a food grade sanitizer.
 - Destroy any exposed food (whether raw or cooked) within 25 feet of incident, food that may have been otherwise contaminated, and food that has been handled by an infected person.

V. Disinfection Recommendations During Outbreaks due to Norovirus

* It is extremely important to use a product that is effective against Norovirus and to follow the manufacturer's directions for use.

- A. **Chlorine bleach** is the recommended disinfectant. (Note: Chlorine bleach may damage fabrics and other surfaces. Please spot test area before applying to visible surface.)

The concentration of bleach needed for disinfection depends on the surface to be disinfected:

- 200ppm (parts per million)
 - Use for stainless steel, food/mouth contact items, toys
 - 1 Tablespoon of bleach in 1-gallon water (1:250 dilution)
- 1000ppm (parts per million)
 - Use for non-porous surfaces, tile floors, counter-tops, sinks, toilets, door knobs, railings
 - 1/3-cup bleach in 1-gallon water (1:50 dilution)
- 5000ppm (parts per million)
 - Use for porous surfaces, wooden floors
 - 1 cup bleach plus 2/3-cup bleach in 1-gallon water (1:10 dilution)

Directions for use: Leave bleach solution on surface for 10-20 minutes, and then rinse with clean water.

Open bottles of concentrated chlorine bleach will lose effectiveness after 30 days. Change bottles of bleach every 30 days for accurate concentrations. For disinfecting, use an unopened bottle of chlorine bleach. Prepare a dilution of fresh bleach every day of use and discard unused portions.

- B. Other disinfectants effective against Norovirus can be found on the EPA's website at [://www.epa.gov/oppad001/list_g_norovirus](http://www.epa.gov/oppad001/list_g_norovirus).

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NOT ALL DISINFECTANTS SHOWN ON EPA LIST ARE APPROVED FOR USE IN FOOD FACILITIES. The product label must contain language stating approval for use in (FDA or USDA) food facilities AND provide appropriate directions for use/application rates in these settings. Consult the manufacturer for further information on approval for use on food contact surfaces and/or in food service facilities.

AVOID SPRAY BOTTLE APPLICATION WITH ANY DISINFECTANT!

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