

IPC Advice Bulletin for Care Homes

North Yorkshire Summer Special 2018

To support Care Home staff, here is some information on good infection prevention and control (IPC) practice.

We have recently dealt with a number of outbreaks of suspected viral gastroenteritis in North Yorkshire. A possible reason for this may be the summer holidays resulting in an increased number of visitors to care homes, including children. This bulletin advises on the signs and symptoms of an outbreak, initial actions to be taken when an outbreak is suspected and provides advice on hand hygiene.

Viral gastroenteritis

Viral gastroenteritis is a generic term for a diarrhoeal and/or vomiting illness caused by a number of viruses, including norovirus and sapovirus. Viral gastroenteritis is unpleasant and symptoms usually last for 48-72 hours. It does not usually require GP treatment or hospital admission. Symptoms usually appear within 24-48 hours after exposure to the virus.

Symptoms Include:

- Diarrhoea, often watery
- Nausea
- Vomiting, often sudden
- Stomach cramps
- Headache
- Fever
- Malaise (general feeling of being unwell)



Suspect an outbreak?

An outbreak is defined as two or more residents/staff with the same symptoms with links to time and place. The following advice should be implemented immediately to help prevent the spread of infection:

- Isolate affected residents if possible
- Implement enhanced cleaning, paying particular attention to hard frequently touched surfaces, e.g. handrails, using a hypochlorite solution at a dilution of 1,000 parts per million, e.g. Milton
- Encourage strict staff hand hygiene using liquid soap and warm running water and the appropriate use of PPE
- Inform all visitors of the suspected outbreak. Advise them of the risks and encourage them to carry out hand hygiene if they still choose to visit
- Document all affected residents and details of their symptoms. Keep communicating progress with all staff
- Contact the Community Infection Prevention Team on **01423 557340** (Mon-Fri 9am-5pm) or, if out of hours, Public Health England Team on **0114 304 9843** who will provide advice and guidance

Handwashing during an outbreak

Hand hygiene is the single most effective way of preventing the spread of infection. Effective hand hygiene should be encouraged for every staff member, resident or visitor within a care home.

Staff:

- Should have access to liquid soap, warm running water and disposable paper towels in each resident's room
- Hands should be washed before entering and when leaving an affected resident's room
- Care staff should be bare below the elbows to allow for effective handwashing



Residents:

- All residents should have access to handwashing facilities
- Residents who are unable to wash their hands should be supported to use hand wipes when required
- Residents should be given enough time before meals and after toileting to wash their hands thoroughly

Visitors:

- Don't forget to display the poster 'Are you or have you been suffering from diarrhoea and/or vomiting in the last 48 hours' at the front entrance
- Encourage visitors to wash their hands on entering and leaving the home and between residents if they are visiting more than one resident
- Staff should signpost visitors to the nearest handwashing facilities
- Reasonable adjustments may need to be made so that all visitors can access handwash facilities, e.g. children



REMEMBER!

Alcohol handrub is not effective when dealing with suspected viral gastroenteritis

Visit our website to find useful IPC resources, many of which are free to download www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk