

# IPC Bulletin for Care Homes

## North Yorkshire and York Summer Special 2021

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 and York. This could possibly be due to the use of alcohol handrub in the prevention of COVID-19. 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 chlorine-based disinfectant 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. **Alcohol handrub is not effective against viral gastroenteritis, so when caring for anyone with diarrhoea and vomiting, hand washing with liquid soap and warm running water is essential.** Effective hand hygiene should be encouraged for all staff, residents and visitors, 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 non-alcohol skin 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 a poster such as '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 signpost to the nearest facilities



### Hospital discharge assessments

Staff can visit a closed hospital ward to assess a patient for discharge providing appropriate precautions are taken. Patient's can be discharged from an affected ward to a care home, this should be discussed with the Community IPC Team.

Visit our website to find useful IPC resources, many of which are free to download [www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk](http://www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk)