



**BOROUGH OF POOLE
ENVIRONMENTAL & CONSUMER PROTECTION SERVICES**

DORSET HEALTH PROTECTION UNIT

**THE PROCEDURES YOU NEED FOLLOW IN THE EVENT OF
AN OUTBREAK OF NOROVIRUS**

Also known as Norwalk-like virus (NLV)

This guidance is intended for use in:

Care homes and other residential accommodation, hotels, bed and breakfast, mobile home parks, etc.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 There has been a national increase in the number of reported cases of viral gastroenteritis, these are often associated with outbreaks in a variety of premises, especially where large numbers of people meet or live in close proximity. Outbreaks associated with the norovirus occur in hospitals, residential care homes, schools, day care centres, nurseries, local industry and hotels. It is important to understand that in an outbreak Norovirus will be widely spread across the hotel and can live for several days on soft furnishings. If food is contaminated by an infected person, eg. a buffet several hundred people can become ill at the same time.

This guidance has been produced to support and help you in the control and management of such outbreaks.

1.2 Noroviruses are a group of viruses that cause “stomach flu”, or gastroenteritis in people. The symptoms of norovirus include vomiting, diarrhoea, nausea and stomach cramps. Some people will develop a mild fever, headaches and muscle aches, they will often feel very tired. The disease is usually mild and self-limiting, most people will feel better within 1-2 days, but some people may continue to have diarrhoea for several days.

1.3 Norovirus is detected in the stool or vomit of an infected person. Infection occurs in several ways, which include:

- Eating contaminated food or drinking liquids that are contaminated with the norovirus;
- Touching surfaces or objects contaminated with norovirus, then placing their hands in their mouth;
- Having direct contact with another person who is infected and demonstrating symptoms.

1.4 *An **outbreak** is when two or more persons are confirmed as having the illness typified by symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal pain, and headache.*

1.5 The following guidance provides principles to be applied to manage outbreaks of norovirus.

2.0 WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO AS A MANAGER?

- 2.1 To be aware of the possibility of a norovirus outbreak occurring in the establishment and to monitor any gastroenteric illness of guests or residents to see whether a problem may be emerging.
- 2.2 If a problem is found inform the Dorset Health Protection Unit (Dorset HPU) or Consumer Protection Service (01202) 261700
- 2.3 **Hotels** - To seek advice from the NHS Direct 24 hour service if concerned about the condition of guests or if guests request access to medical advice (telephone 0845 4647) or contact the relevant GP surgery.
Care Homes - Seek advice from clients GP.
Day Centres - Should seek advice from Senior Managers of the Service Unit.
- 2.4 To keep a stock of requisite materials to be used in the event of norovirus. (See Annex 2).
- 2.5 **Hotels** - To maintain a log demonstrating all incidents of reported sickness. (See Annex 1).
Care Homes/Day Centres - To maintain a log of all incidents of reported sickness. See Annex 2.
- 2.6 In all cases to take prompt action to clean and disinfect all areas where release of virus may have occurred.
- 2.7 To as far as possible encourage residents or guests/clients to stay in their rooms if they have been ill to prevent spread of the virus. **Hotels** should not to re-allocate those rooms until a minimum of 72 hours after the guests have departed.
- 2.8 To exclude from work all staff demonstrating symptoms of the virus. They should be excluded for a minimum of 48 hours after symptoms have stopped.
- 2.9 To train staff in norovirus protection measures (see Annex 3).
- 2.10 To give guidance to residents and guests and to encourage them to co-operate fully in containing the outbreak. (Consider placing this document on the staff notice board).
- 2.11 To understand that if the outbreak cannot be brought under control it may be necessary to close the establishment in order to achieve the necessary break in the cycle of re-infection.

3.0 WHAT ARE THE OUTBREAK CLEANING AND DISINFECTION PROCEDURES FOR PUBLIC AREAS?

- 3.1 Refer to Annex 4 for definitions of 'cleaning' and 'disinfection'.
- 3.2 Refer to Annex 3 - Staff Training and Protective Measures for an Outbreak
- 3.3 Toilet facilities in communal areas must be cleaned and disinfected frequently – hourly in periods of peak activity. Particular attention must be paid to WC compartments and WC seats, door handles, light switches, taps and anything else touched by hand. If hand towels are used paper towels should replace them for the duration of the outbreak.
- 3.4 Hard surfaces of corridors, hallways, landings etc should be wiped daily with a bleach solution. Norovirus is easily killed by a weak bleach solution - a dilution 1 part thick bleach to 5 parts of water. The solution, which is made up, should be well shaken or stirred in the container using appropriate health and safety precautions including gloves and protective spectacles to stop splashes into the eye. After spraying the area should be wiped over gently with a cloth to spread the solution evenly. Pay particular attention to door handles, hand rails, lift buttons, light switches and anything else touched by hand. Last thing at night or early in the morning is the best time to carry out this procedure. Cloths should be disposed of after use.
- 3.5 Steam cleaning is the most effective way of disinfecting soft furnishings, particularly in areas known to have been exposed to vomit or faeces. However in the absence of a steam cleaner a less effective alternative is the use of hot soapy water at 60⁰ C - at this temperature rubber gloves will be required for protection from heat.
- 3.6 "Vomiting and faecal accidents" in communal areas need to be immediately covered with paper towels to prevent the dispersal of the virus into the air. Guests must be evacuated from the immediate surrounding area. The doors should be closed and the windows opened wide for a minimum of 1 hour. After removing the gross contamination clean the area with general-purpose detergent solution and disinfect with a bleach solution - if soft surfaces are involved then these should be steam cleaned immediately (viruses do not survive heat treatment). Vacuuming in communal areas should be stopped until the outbreak is over. Vacuum cleaners agitate the virus and release into the air.

4.0 WHAT ARE THE OUTBREAK CLEANING / DISINFECTION PROCEDURES FOR GUESTS / RESIDENTS ROOMS WHO HAVE BEEN ILL WITH NORVIRUS

- 4.1 Refer to Annex 4 for definition of 'cleaning' and 'disinfection'
- 4.2 See Annex 3 – Staff Training and Protective Measures for an outbreak
- 4.3 Ensure staff concerned has sufficient cleaning and disinfection materials **before** entering the room.
- 4.4 On entering the room the worst contaminated areas should be cleaned first.
- 4.5 **All affected rooms must be treated as separate contaminated areas** i.e., personal protective equipment (gloves, aprons, etc) must be renewed when entering each room.

(a) Clean up spillages of excreta/vomit in the room

- Soak up spillage by applying paper towels and flush these down the WC (if present) otherwise place into a yellow clinical waste bag.
- Clean the affected surface with disposable cloth, hot water and detergent and dispose of the cloths into the bag.
- For hard surfaces apply bleach solution, for soft surfaces use a steam cleaner.

(b) Cleaning the Bathroom

- Soak up any visible faeces/vomit by applying paper towels and flushing them down the WC.
- Clean surfaces with disposable cloth, hot water and detergent and dispose of the cloths into the yellow clinical waste bag.
- Disinfect all the hard surfaces by cleaning with a bleach solution paying strict attention to all areas and fittings, which will have been touched. Disinfect all soft surfaces e.g. carpets using steam.
- Leave the surfaces to dry.

(c) Changing Bed Linen and Towels

- Remove all soiled linen and place in water-soluble linen bags. Place these in plastic bags for transfer to the laundry.

(d) General Disinfection of the Room

- Clean all hard surfaces of the room with a bleach solution.
- Steam clean all soft surfaces to achieve disinfection.

4.5 Before leaving the room place all disposable personal protective equipment into a yellow clinical waste bag. Wipe hands with antiseptic wipes and place the wipes in the bag then seal the bag. You can now leave the room taking the bag and other materials with you. The bag should immediately be taken to the external refuse holding area. The employee who does this and any other employees who have been in the room should then immediately wash their hands with bactericidal soap and hot water **before** undertaking any other duties.

5.0 WHAT DO I DO ABOUT FOOD PREPARATION DURING A NOROVIRUS OUTBREAK?

5.1 It is essential that stringent food hygiene rules apply during the course of an outbreak. The essential points to remember are:

- (a) Keep staff (or residents in the case of a care establishment) that are not involved in food preparation away from the kitchen and food stores.
- (b) Be vigilant in ensuring staff engaged in food preparation are symptom free. If you suspect a food handler is demonstrating any signs of symptoms they must immediately be sent home. They must not return to work until they have been free of symptoms for 72 hours. Upon return to work they must remain scrupulous about the washing of their hands.
- (c) If food staff become ill and you are short handed in the kitchen do **not** be tempted to use untrained staff in the kitchen especially ones who may have been undertaking other duties such as cleaning or giving personal care to people. In this situation you will need to bring in staff from outside or arrange for food to be prepared externally and brought into the establishment.
- (d) Any food exposed in a room where a person has been ill (i.e. vomited) including dining areas must be disposed of – food and drink will become contaminated where the virus becomes airborne.

5.2 Remember that although norovirus is not by definition a food poisoning organism because it mainly spreads through the air, person to person and via contact with infected surfaces - it can be spread in food and drink.

6.0 WHAT LAUNDRY PROCEDURES SHOULD I HAVE FOR ROOMS WHERE PEOPLE HAVE BEEN ILL OR SUSPECTED OF BEING ILL WITH NOROVIRUS?

- 6.1 Before handling any soiled or used linen (including towels, pillowcases, sheets and clothes, staff must first put on personal protective equipment. This normally means as a minimum, a disposable apron and gloves.
- 6.2 Linen soiled with vomit or faeces should be placed into water-soluble linen bags in the guest's rooms. These bags should be sealed in the room into a plastic bin bag and taken directly to the laundry room. The soiled laundry should be placed directly into a commercial grade washing machine. The machine should be set on a pre-wash and a wash cycle, which will achieve a minimum temperature of 65°C. Linen, which is not soiled, should be washed to the same temperature. Laundry bags should not be taken through dining areas or kitchens.
- 6.3 There should be physical separation between potentially contaminated laundry and normal laundry even though the contaminated laundry is sealed in black bin bags. This separation should extend to the washing machine so that soiled or potentially contaminated linen must be washed separately to other linen.
- 6.4 Personnel whom handled the soiled linen bags should then dispose of the black plastic bags into the waste skip and wash their hands with bactericidal soap and hot water (they will have removed their disposable apron and gloves etc before they left the guests room - these being placed in the yellow clinical waste bag).
- 6.6 If soiled linen from a room where there has been viral gastro-enteritis is not to be washed in the establishment's own laundry room, but sent to an external laundry, it should be appropriately labelled as being contaminated so that the laundry can take adequate precautions to protect their own staff.

ANNEX 1

WHAT DO I NEED TO HAVE AVAILABLE FOR USE IN THE EVENT OF AN NOROVIRUS OUTBREAK?

1. A sufficient supply of yellow clinical waste bags and black bin bags. ↑
2. A sufficient supply of disposable cleaning materials such as cloths and paper towels. ↑
3. A sufficient supply of disposable aprons, and gloves. You may want to keep a supply of disposable one-piece zip paper overalls (available from builders merchants). ↑
4. A supply of antiseptic hand wipes. ↑
5. A sufficient supply of thick bleach solution for disinfection of surfaces ↑
6. Access to a steam cleaning machine which will be needed for disinfection of soft furnishings, carpets etc in areas or rooms where illness has occurred. ↑
7. A supply of alginate (water soluble) bags for laundry.

ANNEX 2

WHAT ARE THE STAFF TRAINING AND PROTECTIVE MEASURES FOR A NOROVIRUS OUTBREAK?

1. Staff should be made aware of the symptoms of norovirus. ↑
2. Staff should be told of their duty to report to their manager any symptoms they are experiencing. Likewise they should report if they become aware, of any residents or guests who may have symptoms. ↑
3. Staff should be told of the measures to protect themselves from acquiring the illness including personal protective equipment (PPE) to be used in cleaning and laundry procedures (see 6 below). Specific instructions need to be given to food handlers to protect food and drink from contamination and what to do if they believe food or drink may have been contaminated. **Staff involved in cleaning or personal care should not take any part in the preparation or serving of food.** ↑
4. Staff should be instructed in specific cleaning procedures and the desirability of room isolation of infected persons (although this cannot be enforced) and the importance of a firebreak in the letting of rooms (i.e. non-occupation) where illness has occurred. ↑
5. Staff should be told that there are legal duties that require both themselves and the management to comply with norovirus protection procedures. ↑
6. Staff involved in cleaning up vomit or faeces or in the general cleaning/disinfection of rooms will require PPE. Staff must be told that PPE must be put on **before** contaminated areas are entered. The basic PPE is disposable gloves and disposable apron. Staff must be told of the importance of removing all PPE and placing this in the yellow clinical waste bag together with disposable cloths, paper towels etc and to tie the bag securely before they leave the room being cleaned. ↑
7. Staff must be instructed on the importance of frequent hand washing where they are involved in cleaning or in the personal care of persons who may have or do have gastro-intestinal symptoms. Staff must be told about the correct laundry procedures. ↑

ANNEX 3

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CLEANING AND DISINFECTING?

It is important to understand the difference between cleaning and disinfection.

Cleaning is the process that removes debris including faeces and vomit. If this material is not removed then the process of disinfection will be ineffective as the disinfectant will be absorbed into the detritus and will not therefore disinfect the contact surface, which the detritus is on (toilet seat, floor, wall etc).

Disinfection is the killing of the virus on surfaces within the rooms. Disinfection can either be carried out chemically or thermally. The chemical method using bleach solution is used on hard surfaces, which will not be damaged by bleach; thermal disinfection using steam is used on all other surfaces.

The effectiveness of cleaning and disinfection is proportional to the care with which it is done.

ANNEX 4

CORRECT HAND WASHING PROCEDURE

HOW TO WASH YOUR HANDS

1 Use **soap** and warm water



2 Rub the soap over **both sides** of your hands

3 ...between **every finger** and around the **nails**



4 Rinse off with **clean** warm water

5 **Dry hands** properly with a clean towel or under a hot air dryer



ANNEX 5

RESIDENTS / GUEST INFORMATION LEAFLET ON NOROVIRUS

ESTABLISHMENT NAME _____

Some people staying at the premises have reported a stomach bug. It is suspected this may be norovirus (more commonly known as viral gastro-enteritis). Consequently, we are taking every precaution. We are acting on the advice of the Dorset Health Protection Unit and Consumer Protection Services to prevent the spread of this illness to others. To assist us in this effort we would be grateful if you would tell the management without delay if you experience any symptoms of gastro-enteritis. The symptoms of norovirus include vomiting, diarrhoea, nausea and stomach cramps. Some people will develop a mild fever, headaches and muscle aches, they will often feel very tired. The disease is usually mild and self-limiting, most people will feel better within 1-2 days, but some people may continue to have diarrhoea for several days.

Please note that norovirus is not food poisoning. It is a virus spread from person to person or via air currents. It can also be spread from surfaces, which affected persons have touched. It has become increasingly common in the UK in the last few years.

I feel unwell what do I do?

- Firstly decide whether your symptoms may be typical of norovirus i.e. has there been a sudden onset of nausea and actual vomiting possibly accompanied by diarrhoea with a general feeling of weakness with possible headache and fever.
- If this is the case, tell the management and if you feel it necessary request a visit by a doctor. You may also want to ring NHS Direct on 0845 4647 for health advice.
- You may be asked to provide a stool sample by a GP or by the Borough of Poole, Consumer Protection Services. This is to try and confirm the identity of the particular organism causing your illness.
- **Please stay in your room for a minimum of 12 hours from when your symptoms have subsided.** The management will supply you with bottled water, light snacks etc and any other help you may need. If you have “an accident” in the room with spillage of faeces or vomit please do not feel embarrassed. It is essential that the management are made aware of the issue immediately. This will allow them make suitable arrangements to deal with the matter. – **Norovirus is highly infectious and others will be put at risk if the spillage is not dealt with immediately.**

- Be very thorough about hand washing after using the toilet. This cannot be overstressed particularly if anyone else is sharing your room. If your room is not en-suite then ask the management to transfer you to a room, which is.
- Please try and aerate the room as much as possible by keeping the window open. This will reduce levels of contamination in the room.
- Please do not attempt to travel home on public transport until you are sure the symptoms have subsided. Take advice from *Dorset Health Protection Unit and Consumer Protection Services*.
- Remember to be scrupulous with hand washing for at least 72 hours after symptoms have finished, as it is still possible that you could be excreting the virus and could pass it on to others at home. If you work in the catering industry or with children or the elderly or in a hospital you must not return to work until 72 hours after your symptoms have stopped. If you are unsure what to do or you think your employer is being unreasonable Seek advice from your Local Authority.

THE MANAGEMENT IS VERY APPRECIATIVE OF YOUR CO-OPERATION

ANNEX 6

CONTACTS LIST

Dorset Health Protection Unit (Dorset HPU)

Tel: 01202 851272

Environmental and Consumer Protection Services

Tel: 01202 261700 (office hours)
0800 506050 (out of hours)

ANNEX 7

CONTROL OF OUTBREAK OF NORWALK LIKE VIRUS

WEEKLY ILLNESS RECORD

Report for Week Ending

Number of People Ill

NAME OF ESTABLISHMENT

Date Reported	Name and home contact details	Resident /Staff	Room No.	Date of Arrival	Date of Onset	Symptoms	Days ill	Where did Vomiting occur e.g. coach, dining room,	Dr. Consulted	EHO Told? yes/no

ANNEX 8

INFORMATION LEAFLET FOR PEOPLE SUFFERING FROM VIRAL GASTROENTERITIS

WHAT IS MOST LIKELY TO BE CAUSING MY DIARRHOEA AND VOMITING?

The most likely cause is a virus called norovirus. It is a virus that can suddenly make you become ill with vomiting and/or diarrhoea, You may also experience a headache, stomach pains, aching muscles and a fever. The symptoms can be severe, and whilst distressing usually resolve within 1-2 days. You may, however, feel generally unwell for a few more days.

HOW CAN I MAKE MYSELF BETTER?

Norovirus is a virus. This means that antibiotics will not help, and they could make you feel worse. The virus has to run its course. You will lose a lot of fluid through vomiting and diarrhoea. It is important that you **replace the fluid you lose** with frequent sips of water, dilute juice or a rehydration mixture (such as dioralyte, available from pharmacies). Do not drink too much in one go as this may make you vomit. You can take paracetamol to help the headache and general aches, but always read the instructions on the packet.

**Anti diarrhoea mixtures or tablets DO NOT help - they will only prolong the illness.
Antibiotics DO NOT help in the management of viruses.**

HOW DO I MAKE SURE MY FRIENDS AND FAMILY DO NOT CATCH THIS FROM ME?

The virus is found in the vomit and faeces of infected people. **You should not prepare food while you are ill.** If someone has diarrhoea or vomits and does not clean their hands properly, any surface they touch becomes a source of infection for a short while afterwards. Others may then touch that surface and unknowingly put their hands or fingers near their mouth. They are then likely to become ill with the virus. If you vomit, the virus may be released into the air and will contaminate surfaces and objects a few feet away from where the sickness happened. Hard surfaces can be cleaned with a general detergent (washing up liquid), and then disinfected with a diluted bleach solution. Particular attention must be paid to the lavatory, lavatory handle, sinks, taps and WC door handles. The cloth used for cleaning must then be thrown away.

**Scrupulous hygiene is of the utmost importance especially after using the toilet.
You should not prepare food while you are ill.
You should stay away from work or school until two days after your symptoms have stopped.**

WHEN DO I NEED TO SEEK MEDICAL ADVICE?

- If the stomach pains do not go away or get worse.
- If you notice blood in the vomit or diarrhoea.
- If you are unable to keep fluids down and this is lasting more than 4-6 hours.
- If you have an underlying health problem which may be affected by not keeping the tablets down.
- If you have underlying health problems which may be affected by not eating and drinking e.g. diabetes.

SOURCES OF ADVICE

- In the first instance phone **NHS Direct 0845 4647**
- Local pharmacies
- Your General Practitioner.

PLEASE ONLY PHONE FOR AN AMBULANCE IF ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY