

Advice to schools from the HEALTH PROTECTION AGENCY.

Dear Parent/Carer,

This letter is to advise you of the diarrhoea and vomiting illness which is present in the community at this time of year and what you can do to reduce the spread of the infection.

Norovirus is commonly known as Winter Vomiting Disease and occurs commonly in the community and in schools and nurseries in particular at this time of year.

What are the symptoms?

- Diarrhoea and vomiting usually lasting 1-2 days

What should you do if your child is unwell?

- Make sure they get lots of rest.
- Ensure they drink plenty of fluids, taking sips rather than gulps to avoid vomiting.
- Give Paracetamol or Ibuprofen, according to the product instructions for the age of the child, to help keep their temperature down.
- If your child is unusually sleepy, won't take fluids or has other symptoms, such as blood in their diarrhoea, an unusual rash, headache, neck stiffness or difficulty breathing, ring NHS Direct (0845 4647), contact your GP or take your child to hospital.
- Please ring your child's nursery/school and let them know that your child is ill and what symptoms they have.
- Keep them at home until they are well enough to return to school. However, if your child has been suffering from diarrhoea and vomiting keep them at home until they have been free of symptoms for 48 hours.

How can you prevent the spread of these infections?

Hand washing is one of the most important ways to prevent the spread infections. This applies to the child who is ill and the person looking after them. Hands should always be washed, using liquid soap if possible:

- Before and after caring for your child.
- After using the toilet.
- Before eating or handling food.
- After cleaning up a mess (vomit, faeces or urine).

Other ways of preventing the spread of infection are to:

- Keep a separate towel for the family members who have symptoms.
- Dispose promptly of used tissues and other items that your child may have coughed or sneezed on.
- Wash soiled clothing, bed linen and towels in a washing machine. Use the hottest wash for that fabric.
- Clean baths and washbasins thoroughly and disinfect after use.
- If cleaning up diarrhoea or vomit, wash the surface with hot soapy water and disinfect before allowing to dry. If using bleach remember that it can remove the colour from fabrics and can burn the skin.

Keep your child away from other children and people that are particularly vulnerable, e.g. the elderly and those with chronic illnesses.