

Norovirus (or Noro-like Illness) Outbreak Management in Child Care and Early Learning Programs

Norovirus spreads very easily. If you suspect an outbreak, start following this checklist immediately.

Communication	Date Completed																
Report norovirus or other gastrointestinal outbreaks to the Public Health – Seattle & King County Communicable Disease Program (PHSKC-CD) at 206-296-4774. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An outbreak is 2 or more children or staff with similar gastrointestinal symptoms (diarrhea, vomiting, nausea, stomach cramps) starting within a 48-hour period that can't be explained by other reasons (like medications, food allergies, or changes in diet). 																	
Report outbreaks to WA DCYF Licensur.																	
Inform families and staff of outbreak. Provide information on norovirus symptoms and prevention measures. See sample letters with translations .																	
Post outbreak notices at entrances. When possible, limit nonessential visitors.																	
Handwashing – Washing hands with soap and water physically removes norovirus particles from hands.																	
Increase frequency of handwashing for children and staff. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use soap and water. Hand sanitizer is not effective against norovirus. Follow handwashing steps outlined in WAC 110-300-0200. Monitor handwashing to make sure everyone washes for at least 20 seconds! Make sure handwashing signs are posted. 																	
Cleaning & Disinfection – Norovirus can live on a surface for weeks and survive temperatures up to 145°F.																	
Step 1: Safely remove visible vomit or feces right away using personal protective equipment, including disposable gloves, mask, and plastic apron. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wipe it up using paper towels. Do not vacuum. Use something like kitty litter or baking soda on carpets and upholstery to soak up the liquids. 																	
Step 2: Make a disinfectant solution by mixing bleach and water daily (recommended) or use an EPA-registered disinfectant for norovirus (only with licensur approval). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the handout How to Mix Bleach Solutions (kingcounty.gov). Use the percentage of sodium hypochlorite on the bleach bottle (see table below) to determine how much bleach and water to mix (unless directed otherwise by the PHSKC-CD): <table border="1" style="margin-left: 40px; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <thead> <tr style="background-color: #d3d3d3;"> <th style="width: 15%;"></th> <th colspan="3">Using unscented bleach with a sodium hypochlorite percentage of:</th> </tr> <tr style="background-color: #d3d3d3;"> <th>Water</th> <th>2.75%</th> <th>5.25-6.5%</th> <th>7.0-8.25%</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1 Gallon</td> <td>¾ cup</td> <td>⅓ cup</td> <td>¼ cup</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1 Quart</td> <td>3 Tablespoons</td> <td>4 teaspoons</td> <td>1 Tablespoon</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Using unscented bleach with a sodium hypochlorite percentage of:			Water	2.75%	5.25-6.5%	7.0-8.25%	1 Gallon	¾ cup	⅓ cup	¼ cup	1 Quart	3 Tablespoons	4 teaspoons	1 Tablespoon	
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some situations may need stronger bleach solutions. Please consult with the PHSKC-CD. 																	
Step 3: Use the 3-Step Method to clean, rinse, and disinfect all surfaces , including high-touch surfaces (such as doorknobs and handles) and objects that are usually sanitized. Do this frequently during the day, and if possible, when children are not present. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Clean using soapy water. Rinse with water and wipe dry with a paper towel. Disinfect by applying the bleach solution and leaving it on the surface for at least 5 minutes (or closely follow directions on EPA-registered disinfectant you have licensur approval to use). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the surface is still wet after 5 minutes, wipe it dry with a paper towel. For any surfaces that contact food (like highchair trays or plates) or toys put in the mouth, rinse again with water to reduce any leftover chemicals on the surface. 																	

<p>Contaminated areas: Norovirus is likely to be on surfaces and objects within 25 feet of any vomit or in spaces where sick people have spent time. Pay special attention to cleaning and disinfecting these areas, the kitchen, and food surfaces.</p> <p>Laundry: Wash clothing or fabric that may have vomit or diarrhea on it as soon as possible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If it belongs to a child, use gloves to put items in a disposable bag and send home for washing. • Programs and families should follow the instructions below to safely handle and wash laundry. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Wear rubber or disposable gloves. o Handle items carefully without shaking them. o Wash items with detergent and hot water then machine dry them on the hottest setting. o Wash hands with soap and water after doing laundry. • For carpets and upholstered items: Steam clean at a temperature of 158°F for five minutes or 212°F for one minute, or use an EPA registered norovirus disinfectant that is effective on porous surfaces. 	
Exclusion Criteria and Illness Monitoring	
Check all children and staff when they arrive at the program for any symptoms.	
<p>Follow these exclusion guidelines (stricter than Child Care and Early Learning WAC):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and staff who are sick with either vomiting or diarrhea should be sent home. • Children and staff who are sick or recovering need to stay home until at least 48 hours after symptoms have stopped. 	
Monitor illness by completing the line list provided by PHSKC-CD which includes person's name, symptoms, date symptoms began (onset date), and date person returns to the program.	
Other Control Measures	
<p>Grouping</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If possible, keep staff and children in consistent classrooms and groups. Try to keep staff who worked with sick children in the same room or area to limit spread. • Keep sick children away from others and out of common areas while awaiting pick up. 	
<p>Meals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop self-serve family style foodservice until the outbreak is over. • Have staff set tables and serve children so dining items, like utensils and pitchers, are not shared. • Consider asking parents to provide foods from home for their own children. • Consider options such as bagged lunches or meal delivery. • Ensure food service staff are wearing gloves when handling, serving, or preparing food. 	
<p>Gatherings and Events</p> <p>Consider canceling or postponing large gatherings, parties, and special events until the outbreak is over.</p>	
Ending Outbreak Control Measures	
Continue following all infection control measures listed above until there have been no new illnesses for at least 4 days or PHSKC-CD provides additional guidance.	
Other Resources	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For more detailed information, see the WA DOH norovirus toolkit for schools and childcares. • Norovirus Illness: Key Facts (CDC) • Norovirus: Facts for Food Workers (CDC) 	