

All Hampstead Hill School Policies are always to be read and considered in conjunction with Equal Opportunities, Race Equality and Inclusion Policies. This Policy of Hampstead Hill School applies to all sections of the school including the Early Years Foundation Stage.

# Hampstead Hill School

## Health and Safety Policy:

### Guide to Norovirus



## Background

This guidance has been produced to enable Principals and key health professionals to effectively control outbreaks of illness associated with Norovirus.

## What is Norovirus?

Outbreaks of Norovirus (NV) infection have increased substantially in recent years, particularly in semi closed communities such as schools. NV was previously called Small Round Structured Virus (SRSV) or Norwalk-like virus (NLV) and causes what many people still call 'Winter Vomiting Disease' although it can occur at any time of year.

NV is highly infectious. Infection usually occurs 12 – 48 hours after exposure. Transmission is usually from person to person by hand to mouth contact, although it may also occur from aerosols or environmental contamination, especially following severe diarrhoea or projectile vomiting. Individuals will remain infectious for at least 48 hours after symptoms have stopped

The main symptom is vomiting, often projectile, though nausea, diarrhoea, headache, fever and muscle aches also occur. The illness, although unpleasant, is generally mild and short lived, (12-72 hours). However, people with pre-existing chronic medical conditions may develop more serious symptoms. Treatment in most cases requires increased fluid intake but may also require medical advice from their GP.

Anyone presenting with symptoms at school should be kept apart from other students and staff and be sent home as soon as possible. They should remain off school until they have been clear of symptoms for 48 hours.

## Infection occurs by the following routes:

- Hand to Mouth Contact

Surfaces may be contaminated directly by vomit or by the fine mist of virus particles produced during projectile vomiting. Similar spread can occur from diarrhoea. The infection occurs when a person touches a contaminated surface such as a tap, toilet flush handle or light switch, then has hand to mouth contact without first washing their hands.

- Inhalation

NV maybe spread from aerosol of vomit. When sudden projectile vomiting occurs, a fine mist of virus particles passes into the air, which can be inhaled by anyone in the immediate vicinity.

- Contaminated Food and Utensils

Food and utensils in the vicinity of a vomiting incident for example bowls of uncovered fruit, prepared food or utensils, which have been handled by infected staff or pupils who have not washed their hands, can also be a source of spread of the virus.

- Direct Person to Person

Less common – usually requires intimate contact e.g. caring for someone infected with the norovirus.

## Preventing / Preparing for an Outbreak

While it is not possible to prevent an outbreak occurring under all circumstances, the following precautions will help to reduce the likelihood of an outbreak becoming established:

- Vigilant monitoring of vomiting and diarrhoea incidents on the premises.
- Early identification of the signs of an outbreak.
- Staff training and awareness of their role.
- Awareness amongst staff and parents / carers regarding the importance of not reporting for work or school if suffering from sickness or diarrhoea (until 48 hours after symptoms have cleared). NB this applies to **all** staff and pupils, not just food handlers
- Thorough routine cleaning procedures for hand contact surfaces such as taps, toilet handles, door handles etc. ( see 5.0)

Have a plan identifying the equipment, staffing and resources required for the control of an outbreak and ensure the availability of cleaning materials, liquid soap, disposable towels, waste bags etc.

Cleaners must be provided with sufficient equipment for their own safety and to ensure that cleaning is effective e.g. gloves and aprons, disposable cleaning cloths/paper.

## Identifying an Outbreak

In order to control the spread of NV it is essential that outbreaks be identified as soon as possible.

- An outbreak is defined as ‘the occurrence of two or more related cases of the same infection’ but in practice reporting is necessary if 5% or more pupils or staff affected by similar symptoms. This is a general guide and there will be exceptions where reporting will be triggered by lower infection rates e.g. special schools where there will be vulnerable children that may be immune suppressed and/or incapable of implementing good personal hygiene.

*Key indicators of a viral outbreak are:*

- Sudden onset of vomiting or diarrhoea– they may often not have sufficient warning to reach a toilet.
- A rapidly increasing number of people with symptoms.

If you suspect you may have an outbreak of vomiting and diarrhoea immediately contact

- your local Environmental Health Department (EHD)
- your Health Protection Unit (HPU)

Early signs of a viral gastroenteritis outbreak can be very similar to a food poisoning outbreak; the Environmental Health Department (EHD) may wish to check for any possible link to food or to a private water supply.

## Controlling an Outbreak

The Principals Role:

If you have an outbreak of vomiting and diarrhoea strict control at an early stage is essential to prevent further spread. As the Principal, you have a key role in controlling the outbreak. You should:

- Identify the possibility of an outbreak (see Identifying an Outbreak above) and report it to the EHD and HPU at the earliest opportunity.
- Implement strict infection control measures in full (see section 5)
- Ensure that a person or persons are nominated (i.e. yourself and or others) to:
  - Maintain a record of all staff/pupil cases
  - Liaise with EHD and HPU.
  - Implement control measures in full
- Inform and provide advice to all relevant persons including parents, children etc.
- Inform and provide advice and training to staff regarding their role in controlling the outbreak.
- **If the outbreak is not controlled (i.e. the daily number of new cases is steady or rising) then:**
  - **Consider restricting pupil movements.**
  - **Consider withdrawal from use of certain communal areas.**
  - **Seek advice from EHD and HPU on further management of situation**
  - **Stool samples may be requested from up to five affected people to confirm the diagnosis. Your EHD and HPU will advise you about local arrangements. You may be asked to keep specimen pots at school, so they are readily and easily accessible for any new cases**

## Visitors

Visitors to the school during an outbreak should be advised of the situation, and, if possible, their visit postponed. If not they should be given an information sheet. They should not visit the school if they are unwell themselves.

Provide hand-washing and drying facilities for any visitors.

## School trips and journeys

Advice should be sought from the HPU regarding postponement or delay of any school trips or journeys due to take place during an outbreak

## Staff/pupils

It is essential that all staff, pupils and their parents / carers are made aware of the importance of staying away from the school if they are suffering from diarrhoea or vomiting.

NB – Staff/pupils that appear well may actually be infected but have not yet developed symptoms

## Infection Control Measures and Environmental Cleaning

Public and communal areas need regular cleaning during an outbreak.

Bleach based products are very effective although users need to ensure that all health and safety risks are fully assessed. A concentration of 0.1% hypochlorite solution (1000ppm) will effectively destroy NV. This can be achieved by the use of a dilute solution of household bleach (check label for concentration), or as a safer alternative 'Milton' fluid (standard strength is 2%, dilute 1 part Milton in 19 parts water).

For areas of gross contamination use 1% hypochlorite solution (10,000ppm).

Bleach/Milton can be obtained through County Supplies. The County also supplies a number of 'combined' cleaning and disinfecting agents but at the present time the manufacturers of these products are not able to confirm if these will effectively inactivate NV.

If anyone should vomit in an area where there is uncovered food or drink then it must be discarded since there is a risk that it has been contaminated with the virus.

- Following all vomiting incidents, all surfaces must be thoroughly cleaned, and dried, and where possible, evacuate the area during this period.
- Deep steam cleaning of soft furnishings e.g. curtains and carpets where pupils/staff have been unwell should be undertaken. After cleaning, ensure that rooms are well ventilated.
- Food surfaces that may be contaminated following a vomiting incident should be immediately, thoroughly cleaned.
- Ensure all surfaces in toilet areas are cleaned regularly and after any incident, and all surfaces wiped with a hypochlorite solution.

- If an air conditioning facility is in use this should be isolated and switched off in affected areas - professional advice should be sought on decontamination of the system before further use.

Date adopted: September 2016

Updated September 2016

Name: Andrea Taylor

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Taylor', is written over a light grey rectangular background.

Signed: