



FACT SHEET

Gastroenteritis in nurseries and afterschool activities (SFO)

In order to prevent the spread of infection it is important that affected children and adults remain at home until they are no longer infectious

For the nursery

In cases of diarrhoea/vomiting infected persons should stay at home until 48 hours have passed since their last episode of diarrhoea or vomiting.

For primary schools

In cases of diarrhoea/vomiting infected persons should stay at home until 48 hours have passed since their last episode of diarrhoea or vomiting. Adult/pupils that handle or serve school meals should stay at home until 48 hours have passed since their last episode of diarrhoea or vomiting.

Environmental health regulations for schools and nurseries

§17 Prevention of infection:

Planning and management within the school or nursery should be such that the risk of the spread of infectious diseases is minimised, as far as practically possible.



Effective handwashing

- First wash dirty hands thoroughly with **liquid soap** for at least 30 seconds, rinse and dry with a paper towel.
- Use the paper towel to turn off the tap.
- Then apply **hand disinfectant** over all hand surfaces. Rub in for at least 15 seconds until your hands are dry.

When a child has diarrhoea or vomits at nursery

- The sick child should be sent home and the other children sent outside to play in the fresh air.
- Any vomit or diarrhoea should be cleaned up with paper towels. These should be placed in a knotted plastic bag and thrown in the garbage.
- The affected area should be disinfected.

Disposable gloves

Use disposable gloves when cleaning up after diarrhoea or vomiting.

Keeping hands clean is the best way to prevent the spread of infection!

Take the following steps after an outbreak at nursery/primary school:

- The sick child should stay at home.
- The other children should stay outside as much as possible.
- Try to prevent the mixing of different groups of children at nursery.
- Wash toys daily, paying special attention to toys that the children put in their mouths.
- Wash and if possible disinfect points of contact, especially door handles, flush buttons and taps.
- Let parents know when children can return after illness.

Diarrhoea

The most common cause of diarrhoea is a viral infection such as norovirus, adenovirus or rotavirus. An affected person is usually no longer infectious after 48 hours without symptoms. When diarrhoea is caused by certain bacterial infections it may be necessary to carry out stool tests before your child can return to nursery.

Symptoms

Symptoms associated with this type of viral infection include the acute onset of vomiting, diarrhoea, nausea and stomach pain. In some cases flu-like symptoms such as fever, and aching muscles and joints can also be present. Viruses are extremely contagious and it's important to take steps to prevent the spread of the infection as soon as an outbreak occurs. The best ways to prevent the spread of infection are regular and thorough washing of hands and keeping sick children at home.

Viruses can spread

Viruses can spread through hand contact, through airborne droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes, and via contaminated food and drinking water.

The incubation period for a virus is 12-48 hours, and symptoms usually last for one 1-2 days.

Virus infection treatment

It is not usually possible to treat a viral infection directly, but it is possible to lessen the symptoms and prevent complications. Take good care of the affected child and ensure they drink plenty of fluids. In order to prevent dehydration, fluids should not contain too much sugar (fizzy drinks for example) as this can make the diarrhoea worse. Diet drinks contain sweeteners that bind with water in the digestive system, which can also worsen symptoms or delay recovery. Your pharmacist can give advice on rehydration. Infants can and should be breastfed normally.

Young children with diarrhea

Young children under 2-3 with diarrhoea should be followed especially closely because they can become dehydrated quickly. Signs of dehydration can include that your child is: thirsty and/or has a dry mouth drowsy and unresponsive and/or tired distressed and/or crying and/or has dark-coloured urine.

When should you contact your doctor?

- If your child is under 6 months old
- If there is blood in your child's stool or vomit
- If your child becomes unresponsive or their general condition has deteriorated
- If your child refuses fluids or is not urinating

With small children it is better to contact your doctor if you're unsure, especially if your child has **both diarrhoea and vomiting symptoms** at the same time.

