

Respiratory and Gastrointestinal

Outbreak Management Guidance Child Care Facilities

The purpose of this document is to assist child care facility operators in managing an outbreak of respiratory and gastrointestinal illness. The measures outlined in this document should be implemented after an outbreak has been declared at the facility.

1. Illness Exclusion

- Ill children should be moved to an area away from the other children until they can be picked up by their parent/guardian.
- Parent/guardian of ill children should be called and advised to take their ill child home.
- Staff who become ill with diarrhea or 2 or more episodes of vomiting must immediately leave the facility. If mandated caregiver-child ratios cannot be maintained, the facility may need to be closed or some children sent home until there is a sufficient number of non-symptomatic staff.
- Ill children and staff should not return to the facility until at least 48 hours after their last episode of vomiting or diarrhea. There are many potential causes of vomiting and diarrhea in children. However; these illnesses in a child should be considered a case of gastrointestinal illness unless the facility has been provided information directly from the child's physician (e.g. doctor's note) indicating that the child's illness is not caused by a communicable disease.

2. Health Teaching/Notice to Parents

- Review recommendations for control and follow-up with parents and staff.
- A letter to parents can be helpful in ensuring that parents keep their child at home if they are experiencing gastrointestinal symptoms, and can provide other information of interest to parents. A letter that you can use is available from your outbreak response lead.

3. Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette

- Should be stressed for children and staff.

Frequent Hand Hygiene:

Wash with soap and water or use alcohol –based hand rub:

- Upon arrival and when leaving the school
- After performing personal functions such as blowing your nose or using the toilet
- After assisting children with blowing/wiping their noses or using the toilet
- Before and after eating, preparing or serving food, or feeding someone
- After removing gloves
- When hands are visibly soiled
- After handling garbage

Poster:

Hand washing <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/healthinfo/ipc/if-hp-ipc-flu-handwash-how-to.pdf>

Hand washing using hand rub <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/Infofor/hp/if-hp-flu-hand-rub-how-to.pdf>

Respiratory Etiquette

Encourage children/staff to:

- cough and sneeze into their sleeve or
- cover their mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing
- throw away used tissues immediately after sneezing, coughing or wiping their nose.
- perform hand hygiene as described above after.

Poster:

Cover your cough <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/healthinfo/ipc/if-hp-ipc-cover-your-cough-general.pdf>

4. Enhanced Cleaning/Disinfection

- All high-touch surfaces in the facility (including toys, sink tap handles, doorknobs, tabletops, diaper change surfaces, etc.) should be cleaned and disinfected at least once daily during the outbreak, and more often if possible.
- Suggested guidelines for cleaning/disinfecting during a gastrointestinal outbreak can be found in the document [Suggested surface cleaning /disinfection guidelines](#)
- Ensure that personal protective equipment (gowns, gloves, masks, and eye protection) are available for staff that will be in contact with surfaces heavily contaminated with vomit or diarrhea. These surfaces should be cleaned according to the document [Cleaning and disinfecting, blood spills, feces, vomit and other body fluids](#) (or refer to Appendix I of the [Health and Safety Guidelines for Child Care Facilities](#)).

5. Shared Toy Restrictions

Discontinue the use of:

- Communal play equipment (e.g. water play tables, sand play tables, sensory tables (e.g. confetti, paper, etc.), playdough, cardboard puzzles) until the outbreak is over.
- Communal play areas (e.g. gross motor rooms), or, thoroughly clean/disinfect play equipment between uses.
- Natural materials (sticks, cardboard rolls) that cannot be cleaned.

6. Interaction with Visitors and Other Groups

- Children should remain in their particular room as much as possible during an outbreak.
- Some facilities are located on the same campus as other facilities. Interaction between children in the outbreak facility and students of other facilities on the same campus should be minimized during the outbreak.
- Consider postponing offsite activities (e.g. field trips) involving children in rooms in which gastrointestinal illness has been identified that were to take place during the GI outbreak.
- Volunteers and special visitors should be discouraged from visiting the facility during the outbreak.

7. Food Handling

- Where possible, implement measures to minimize children handling shared food and exposure to items that may touch another child's food:
 - Dispense food onto plates for children.
 - For snack programs, dispense snacks directly to children, and use pre-packaged snacks only.
- Ensure that food handling staff:
 - Practice good hand hygiene.
 - Stay home if they are ill.
- Ensure that all surfaces of the tables and chairs (including the underneath edge of the chair seat) are cleaned and disinfected after each meal.
- Staff who are cleaning and disinfecting other parts of the facility should not be involved in food preparation or service.
- Please note that the use of disposable dishes is not required during outbreaks.

8. On-going Monitoring and Surveillance

- Complete the illness incident record daily. The illness incident record should be faxed to your outbreak response lead by noon each business day.
- Staff should monitor for and log illness in all children and staff of the facility, not just in rooms where illness has already been identified.
- Staff should ask parents/guardians for detailed illness symptoms in their child when they call to say their child will not be at the facility that day, and log this information.

9. Closing the Outbreak Investigation

- Activity restrictions should remain in place until you are notified by your outbreak response lead that the outbreak has been declared over.
- After your outbreak has been declared over, your facility should remain on enhanced lookout for any new cases for 72 hours and any new cases should be reported promptly.

If you have questions or require additional information on managing gastrointestinal or respiratory outbreaks please contact your local Public Health Nurse or Public Health Inspector.