

Respiratory and Gastrointestinal Outbreak Management Guidance for Schools

The following infection prevention and control measures will help to reduce the spread of infection.

1. **Parent/alternate should be notified** as soon as you have determined that there is an ill child. It is advisable that the child be picked up rather than sent home on the bus.
2. **The ill student should be promptly removed from contact with other children** to another supervised location until parent/alternate arrives. This area would need a thorough cleaning of all surfaces once the individual has left the area (particularly for children with vomiting and/or diarrhea).
3. **Increased frequency of cleaning and disinfection of high touch surfaces** such as door knobs, faucet handles, computer keyboards, desk tops and telephones, as well as other areas as appropriate (additional information available from Public Health, depending on the situation).
 - Viral gastroenteritis is caused by viruses that are easily spread through contaminated food, from person to person and by indirect contact with contaminated surfaces. Norovirus is an example of this.
 - Influenza viruses can survive on some surfaces for several hours to days but are rapidly destroyed by cleaning.
4. **Reinforce strict hand hygiene and proper respiratory etiquette** with students and staff. Next to immunization, keeping hands clean is one of the most important ways to stop the spread of disease. Consider increasing the number of hand wash stations (or alcohol based rub stations). Hand washing with plain soap and water is the preferred method of hand hygiene in schools, especially when hands are visibly soiled. If alcohol based hand rubs are used they should be secured dispensers located in supervised areas.

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

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

5. **Students/staff who are ill should remain away from school** until they are feeling well, and are able to fully participate in all daily activities.
6. **Restrict staff and students with gastrointestinal symptoms** from attending the school to prevent further transmission of the disease. Any individual who has experienced diarrhea or vomiting should not return to school until they have been symptom free for at least 24 hours.
7. **Other measures** may be recommended by Public Health depending on the situation.
8. **Immunization with influenza vaccine** remains the corner stone of influenza prevention. All Albertans 6 months of age and older are eligible for provincially-funded seasonal influenza vaccine at no charge. We strongly encourage your staff, the children at your school and their families to be immunized. Contact your local community health services office to arrange immunization.

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

Sources:

Public health Agency of Canada, Public Health Guidance for Post Secondary and Boarding Schools Regarding the Prevention and Management of Influenza-Like-Illness (ILI), including the Pandemic (H1N1 2009 Influenza Virus, modified 2010-07-29. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/corporate/mandate/about-agency/office-evaluation/evaluation-reports/lessons-learned-review-public-health-agency-canada-health-canada-response-2009-h1n1-pandemic/findings-guidance.html>

For more information on Norovirus:

<https://myhealth.alberta.ca/health/pages/conditions.aspx?Hwid=ug2076>