



Clark County Public Health
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(360) 397-8000

Date:
To: Clark County School Administrators
From: Clark County Health Department
Subject: Prevention of norovirus outbreaks in schools

Dear School Administrator

Thank you for notifying us of the increase in student absences at your school. Periodic outbreaks of gastrointestinal illness in various schools have prompted school districts in Clark County to request guidelines for responding to such outbreaks. The following list of recommendations will minimize the transmission of diseases like norovirus as well as some respiratory illnesses.

1. ***Please track the reasons for student and staff absences:*** This will help you understand the extent of the health problem in your school. Specifically, it is useful to know the main symptoms of ill students/staff such as vomiting, diarrhea, cough, sore throat, fever etc. Please see the attached Microsoft Word document which is an example of a tracking form you can use to monitor illness in your schools.
2. ***Encourage frequent and thorough hand washing:*** *This is the most effective way to prevent the spread of illness.* The standard recommendation is to wash hands by wetting them with warm, running water and soap and rubbing them together for at least 20 seconds before rinsing in clean water. It is especially important to encourage hand washing after using the bathroom and before eating a meal (and for food handlers, before preparing food items). Please check that your bathrooms and kitchens are stocked adequately with soap and paper towels.
3. ***Exclude ill students or staff with vomiting and/or diarrhea from school:*** As ill persons can shed virus for 48 hours or more after their last episode of vomiting or diarrhea they can spread the disease to others around them. Our recommendation is to exclude students and staff who experience vomiting and/or diarrhea for 48 hours after the last time they vomited or had diarrhea.
4. ***Clean surfaces thoroughly:***
 - a. ***Routine cleaning:*** Areas such as kitchens, health rooms, bathrooms and surfaces such as door knobs and drinking water fountains should be cleaned routinely with a solution of ½ a cup of standard, household bleach (5.25% bleach) to 1 gallon of water. Please consider cleaning once after students have been dismissed and once just prior to the lunch break. *As you are probably aware, it is very important to let the bleach solution remain in contact with the surface to be cleaned for about 10 minutes.*
 - b. ***Clean up of vomitus or stool on hard surfaces:***
 - i. Put on a mask, eye protection, and gloves as soon as possible when cleaning up vomitus or stool.
 - ii. Ask people in the room or area to leave.
 - iii. Open doors/windows to allow fresh air to circulate.

- iv.* Cover the vomitus or stool with paper towels and spray the towels *with a stronger bleach solution of 2 cups of household bleach to 1 gallon of water.* Remove large debris and discard in a trash bag.
- v.* Spray the soiled area thoroughly *with the stronger bleach solution* again. Also spray surfaces within a few feet of the soiled area. This time allow the solution to air dry. Remove the paper towels and discard in the trash bag.
- vi.* Place gloves and mask in the trash bag and seal or tie off. Place the trash bag in a second trash bag and seal or tie.

Replenish the bleach solution with freshly made solution every 8 hours

Do not mix bleach with other cleaning agents because of the risk of toxicity.

c. Cleaning soiled carpets and other cloth surfaces:

- i.* Remove solids and debris
- ii.* Steam clean at 160 degrees F for 5 min.
- iii.* Quaternary ammonium compounds have not been proven effective against norovirus and should not be used to control outbreaks of diarrhea or vomiting. However, such solutions can be used for odor control, as long as steam cleaning follows.

We appreciate your vigilance and efforts in protecting the health of your students and staff. If you have any questions or if you continue to see more than the usual number of students or staff ill with vomiting and/or diarrhea please call our communicable disease nurse at (360) 397-8182.

GASTROINTESTINAL ILLNESS TRACKING FORM

Name of School: _____

Contact name and telephone number: _____

Date: _____

Name (last, first)	Date of Birth or age	Sex	Student or staff?	Grade/room (students) or Job (staff)	Onset date and time of FIRST vomiting/ diarrhea	Vomiting? (Y/N)	Diarrhea? (Y/N)	Bloody diarrhea? (Y/N)	Fever? (Y/N) (if yes, please note temp.)	Date and time of LAST vomiting/ diarrhea	Name and contact information of parent/guardian