

Reducing the spread of diarrhoea and/or vomiting: Advice for parents

What is it?

- Vomiting is easily recognised, but diarrhoea can be less easy to identify.
- Diarrhoea is the passage of more than one abnormally loose bowel motion in 24 hours. The faeces/motion has no solid shape and will take the shape of any container into which it is put.

What causes it?

- The most common cause is a bug called norovirus, which requires no treatment. The diarrhoea and/or vomiting usually lasts 1 - 2 days.
- Other bugs such as salmonella, cryptosporidium, campylobacter or E.coli O157 can also cause diarrhoea and/or vomiting and can spread from one person to another. These can cause more serious illness.

What should I do?

- Do not send your child to school if they have diarrhoea or vomiting. If your child is unwell with diarrhoea and/or vomiting, pay special attention to hand hygiene in the home.
- If the diarrhoea and/or vomiting is mild, let the illness run its course and give your child plenty of fluids (sips) to prevent dehydration.
- If your child is unusually sleepy, isn't improving after a couple of days, won't take fluids or has other symptoms, such as blood in their diarrhoea, an unusual rash, headache, neck stiffness or difficulty breathing, contact your GP urgently or take your child to hospital.

How are diarrhoea and /or vomiting spread?

- The germs are shed in the vomit and faeces (motions) of those infected and can be spread to other places (taps, other people, food and so on) via hands.
- Germs pass from person to person and through the environment or commonly touched items which have the germs on them.
- Thorough cleaning of the environment/commonly touched items and **not** sharing towels or utensils is very important to stop the spread of infection.

How can it be prevented?

- Good hand washing is one of the most important ways to prevent the spread of germs. This applies to the child who is ill and anyone looking after them.
- Hands should always be washed using warm water and liquid soap after using the toilet, before eating or handling food and after cleaning up a mess (vomit, faeces or urine) or changing nappies.
- Good hand hygiene is crucial to prevent further spread to others.
- If possible, each household member should have a separate towel for their own personal use.

Exclusion

- If your child has diarrhoea and/or vomiting, keep them off school until they have not had any symptoms for 48 hours.
- If your child has been to see the GP and you know what the cause of the illness is, please let the school know as soon as possible as it may help prevent further cases.
- Keep your child away from other children and people who are particularly vulnerable (eg the elderly and those with chronic illnesses) until they have not had symptoms for 48 hours.
- Anyone who has been in contact with someone with vomiting and/or diarrhoea but does not have symptoms themselves, may attend school as normal.