

Infection Prevention Team Newsletter August 2024

Gastroenteritis

We have seen a recent increase in outbreaks of diarrhoea and vomiting recently. Food poisoning is always more common in the summer months as bugs thrive in warmer weather. Did you know that in optimum conditions in as little as ONE hour a single bacterium can increase to 4000 bacteria, which means that after 24 hours that ONE germ could now be 33554432000 bacteria! There has also been a significant increase in viral gastroenteritis (e.g. norovirus) recently.

Here are some key points to remember when dealing with any gastroenteritis outbreak:

- Let us know (ipc@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk) so that we can support you.
- Affected staff must stay off work for **at least 48 hours after** their last episode of vomiting or diarrhoea.
- Residents should be supported to isolate in their room for **at least 72 hours after** their last episode of vomiting or diarrhoea.
- Any shared food/ drink (e.g. juice jugs, fruit bowls, biscuit tins) must be removed.
- Hands must be washed with soap and water sanitizer/ alcohol gel isn't effective against most tummy bugs.
- Enhanced cleaning with a chlorine-based product should be stepped up, especially for frequently touched points such as door handles, toilets, etc
- Visiting should be discouraged and any visitors entering the home must be advised that there is an outbreak and advised to wash their hands on arrival/ departure.
- Wherever possible toilet facilities should be designated separately for affected residents.
- Watch for signs of dehydration in affected residents and support increased fluid intake.
- Laundry should be collected in red alginate bags and washed at the highest safe temperature for the fabric, separately from other residents' laundry.
- Complete any additional actions requested by the IPC team, UKHSA or Environmental Health Officers. This may include submitting a 'diary' of food eaten, collection of stool samples for lab testing, completing a daily 'line list' of cases to help keep track,
- Once there has been no new cases for at least 72 hours a final thorough clean ('terminal clean') should be undertaken. If there has been vomiting in a public area this may include washing/ steam cleaning of carpets & soft furnishings such as curtains.

LINKS: [IPC Policies and Procedures](#) (scroll down) [Free IPC training online](#)

We are always here to help- email us at IPC@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk