

Why have you been contacted by The Environmental Health Service?

We have a legal obligation to investigate causes of food borne illness, and will also advise on precautions that should be taken. We will also investigate the suspected source of contamination (e.g. food and food businesses) and try to ensure that no further cases occur.

What is Viral Gastroenteritis?

Viral gastroenteritis is an acute infectious illness caused by a variety of viruses. The incubation period usually varies between 12-48 hours. Viral gastroenteritis is commonly a cause of outbreaks in schools, hotels, holiday camps, hospitals and other residential institutions. It affects both staff and patients, irrespective of eating meals on the premises.

Further information:

Should you require any further information regarding Viral Gastroenteritis, please contact:

The Food Safety Section,
Environmental Health Service,
South Holland District Council,
Council Offices, Priory Road,
Spalding, Lincs.
PE11 2XE.

Telephone (01775) 761161.
www.sholland.gov.uk



Viral Gastroenteritis (Institutional Outbreaks)

Where do the bacteria come from and how are they spread?

Vomit and faeces of infectious people contain very high numbers of viral particles, which may result in airborne transmission. The illness can also be spread by eating contaminated food, particularly foods that are cooked and then handled further, e.g. prawns and cooked meats etc. and also those foods that do not need cooking e.g. salad items.

Shellfish and irrigated crops may be contaminated by human sewage. In addition direct person to person spread can occur via soiled hands.

SYMPTOMS

- " Diarrhoea
- " Muscle Pain
- " Vomiting (sometimes projectile)
- " Nausea

What should I do to prevent further spread?

1. Food Hygiene

DO NOT prepare or handle food if you feel unwell or have been ill, until 48 hours after recovery.

2. Good Personal Hygiene

Pay particular attention to hand washing after using the toilet, or immediately prior to, preparing, handling or serving food. Use hot soapy water, together with complete hand drying, towels must not be shared. Young children should be supervised to ensure that effective hand washing is carried out.

3. Soiled Clothing and Bed Linen

This should be washed using the "hot cycle" of the washing machine. Soiling to be removed prior to washing (flush debris down WC). Pre-soaking in a household disinfectant solution is advised. Rubber gloves should be worn when dealing with soiled items and hands thoroughly washed afterwards.

4. Toilet Hygiene

Disinfect the toilet at least once a day and wipe hand contact points such as the seat, door handles, taps etc. with a bleach solution at the correct strength.

5. Food Handlers

Persons working with food or in health care facilities who know or suspect that they or a member of their household are suffering from Viral Gastroenteritis must inform their employer immediately.

ADDITIONAL MEASURES TO BE CONSIDERED FOR INSTITUTIONAL OUTBREAKS

- " Exclude affected staff, children under 5 and

other persons who cannot be relied on to observe hygienic practice (e.g. handicapped/infirm/aged) until at least 48 hours after the end of the symptoms (i.e. returned to normally formed stools).

- " Residential institutions should consider isolation arrangements for affected patients (e.g. moving affected persons into one ward/wing of home). Also discuss suspension of activities involving non-residents.
- " Further admissions and transfers to institutions with an outbreak should be carefully considered, until recovery of affected staff and patients.
- " Ensure any suspect foods are not used.
- " Ensure adequate ventilation in sluice rooms and toilets together with regular disinfection of surfaces.
- " Clean hard surfaces with an effective chemical disinfectant or combined detergent/sterilant. Carpets to be cleaned with hot water/detergent and if possible disinfect with an efficient steam cleaner.
- " Provide alcohol hand rinse solutions and/or bactericidal soaps for all staff washing areas.
- " Gloves should be provided for staff dealing with faeces/vomit.