

PRACTICAL CONTROL FOR OUTBREAKS OF DIARRHOEA AND VOMITING IN HOTELS

- Viral gastroenteritis is highly infectious and can spread very readily from person to person. It has many names – gastric flu, winter vomiting disease, small round-structured virus and Norovirus. It can be spread through the faecal-oral route, through vomiting (aerosol spray), through contact surfaces and through food and water.
- **An outbreak is defined as being 2 or more cases in a 48-hour period of unexplained vomiting or diarrhoea amongst staff or guests or both.**
- The following controls are recommended to minimise its spread.

NOTIFICATION

- Notify the Environmental Health Service as they will need to exclude the possibility of food poisoning.
- Keep detailed records of who is affected, their Room Number and when they started to be ill (Date and Time) on the Viral Gastroenteritis Record Form D.

GUESTS

- Seek early medical advice from NHS 111 or the hotel GP practice if you are concerned for any guests – elderly or infirm people become dehydrated and ill very quickly. Contact the Ambulance Service if you consider the situation to be an emergency.
- Increase the number of drinks given to guests. As hotel bedroom water is rarely of drinking quality, ensure there is a supply of bottled water freely available for all guests.
- Encourage guests who are unwell to remain in their own rooms until 48 hours symptom free. (Provide meals where requested.)
- Encourage guests to wash their hands thoroughly after the toilet and before eating. Any cloth towels that are not renewed on each use should be removed and replaced by paper towels.

PRACTICAL CONTROLS

- Equip all staff with protective clothing (gloves and plastic aprons) and ensure that staff wear these when handling symptomatic guests or when cleaning. Simple masks should be available for staff who have to clean up vomit.
- Clean up any vomit or faecal spillages with paper towels. Wash the surfaces with detergent and hot water. When cleaning up hard surfaces where sufferers have actually vomited, a solution 1 part bleach to 10 parts cold water is advisable if the surface is suitable. Leave to air dry. Dispose of all paper towels and cleaning cloths within the room, into a bag, which can be sealed and double bagged. Cordon off public areas where people have vomited until decontaminated. Use a steam cleaner on carpets following cleaning of spillages, if available.
- Make sure that the handling and storage of clean and dirty laundry is separate. Pillows should be disposed of if they are contaminated and not washable. Put dirty laundry into the appropriate sacks within the bedrooms; do not allow it to contaminate corridors. Inform laundry of outbreak prior to collection.
- For general cleaning use detergent and hot water followed by a solution of bleach diluted 1 part to 100 parts, in cold water, to wipe down all hard contact surfaces. Use in all toilets (communal and en suite) and include toilet seats, flush handles, finger plates, taps, door handles etc.
- Clean communal toilets 2 hourly during an outbreak.
- Use disposables as much as possible or dedicated equipment which can be discarded at the end of the outbreak. Throw away toilet brushes and holders in WCs used by sufferers.
- Ventilate areas when people have been ill and minimise access to them. If possible, "rest" rooms where people have been ill before they are re-occupied. Do not vacuum or buff floors unless absolutely necessary, to prevent re-circulation of the virus.
- Check that your dishwasher is providing a "sterilising" wash. Do not wash up crockery in the bedrooms; make sure it goes through the dishwasher or use the "2-sink" method of washing up with a hand-hot final rinse.
- Avoid help-yourself style buffet food during the outbreak and remove exposed food such as bowls of fruit. Any retained food that was prepared by an affected food handler in the 48 hours before symptoms developed, should be thrown away as it could contain the virus.
- Remind staff of the importance of good hand hygiene and provide alcohol gel if sinks are not readily available.

EXCLUSION OF STAFF

- If practical, restrict staff movement from affected areas to non-affected areas and vice versa.
- The manager should check that there are no symptomatic food handlers on duty. Restrict cleaning staff from entering the kitchen or food handling areas.
- Send home all staff that become unwell whilst working. Do not use any open food that they have prepared or handled whilst their symptoms were coming on.
- Keep affected staff away from work until they have been free of symptoms for 48 hours. This is especially important for any food handling staff as the virus can be carried in food.
- Advise staff who remain symptom free not to work at other food premises until the outbreak has been over for 48 hours.
- Agency staff should be advised that they may recommence work after they have been off duty for 48 hours and are symptom free, to prevent spread to other establishments.

NEW ADMISSIONS

- Inform incoming guests of the outbreak before they leave home and give them the option not to stay at the hotel. (It may be necessary to contact tour operators to do this on your behalf, if they hold the guest contact details.)
- Inform any visitors to the hotel about the risk of infection, emphasise the importance of hand washing, and ask them to wash their hands before leaving. A notice on the door will inform "casuals" before they enter the hotel.
- Let the hospital know that there is an outbreak at the hotel if any guest has to be admitted.
- If advised by environmental health or an outbreak control team, coach day-trips may need to be cancelled to reduce the spread of infection. (Any guests who have been ill should not travel on coaches within the 48 hrs following recovery.)
- **The outbreak may be considered over once 48 hours has passed since the last new case was diagnosed.**

DEEP CLEANING

- During the outbreak 'deep clean' the hotel. Use disposable cloths and waste bags.
- Tell your launderer that some of the bedding may be contaminated with virus.
- Thoroughly clean hard surfaces, using detergent and hot water first. Then dilute a quality bleach 1 part to 100 parts in cold water and wipe down hard surfaces with this. Leave to air dry.
- Use a steam cleaner with hot drying cycle for soft surfaces in any room/area that was contaminated. This includes curtains. (You may prefer to use a fogging machine and appropriate chemical if this is available, but you should make sure you do a risk assessment and ensure that your employees are appropriately protected.)
- Launder non-disposable mop heads in a very hot wash once the deep clean is complete. Change shower curtains.
- Thoroughly air chairs, pillows and mattresses.
- Remove any soiled mattresses for disposal, or washing down and steam cleaning. Dry thoroughly before re-use.

REMEMBER scrupulous attention to the detail of disinfection at the start of an outbreak really can pay off.

Visit our website for more information: www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk