Community Infection Prevention & Control Team

Royal Bolton Hospital

Musgrave House

Second Floor – East Wing

Bolton

BL4 0JR

Telephone: 01204 390982

Email: Community[InfectionPrevention&control@boltonft.nhs.uk](mailto:InfectionPrevention&control@boltonft.nhs.uk)

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**Winter illnesses in schools and childcare settings – infection control advice**

Dear colleagues,

We are now in the grips of winter, and are seeing respiratory and gastrointestinal infections on the rise across Bolton. Please see information below and attached to share with staff to prevent the spread of infection at your school or childcare setting.

Influenza and other circulating respiratory viruses

We are currently seeing a steady rise in the number of Flu cases across Bolton and nationally - many of these appear to be in younger children and adults under the age of 65.

Symptoms of flu include:

* High temperature
* Sore throat
* Cough (dry or productive)
* Running, or blocked nose
* Headache
* Sneezing
* General tiredness and aching joints
* Nausea/vomiting or diarrhoea (children)

We are aware that the nasal flu vaccination programme has been behind schedule this year, however Intrahealth and GP practices are endeavouring to catch up as quickly as possible. We would ask schools to remind parents and carers to complete their consent forms or online consent to protect as many children as possible, and for families with children aged 2 and 3 to access the nasal flu vaccine through their family doctor.

We do also encourage staff to obtain their flu jabs. If in a clinical ‘at risk’ group, this will be available for free from the GP. If not, schools and childcare settings may consider funding this for employees. Intrahealth may be able to offer this at cost.

Norovirus

We currently have a number of outbreaks of diarrhoea and vomiting in our primary schools and pre-school settings. The majority of outbreaks of gastrointestinal illness are caused by norovirus. Symptoms of norovirus include vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal cramps, headache and fever.

Norovirus can be spread very easily in a communal setting due to the tiny viral ‘aerosol’ droplets released into the environment if a child or adult experiences sickness or diarrhoea on the premise.

Hand washing is the most effective way to prevent becoming ill from norovirus as the virus can be passed from hand to mouth very easily from direct (person to person) or indirect (touching affected surfaces) contact. We therefore urge our schools and childcare settings to factor hand washing time into the children’s routine, particularly prior to meal or snack times and after communal play.

Please note: **alcohol hand gels/rubs are not effective against norovirus**. See attached poster for display at hand washing sinks (laminated if possible) to remind children and staff how to wash and dry hands correctly.

Also attached is the updated respiratory hygiene and general measures to prevent the spread of infection; sample letters for parents/carers for settings experiencing diarrhoea and vomiting or flu/respiratory illness; flu symptom awareness poster and PHE ‘Spotty Book’.

Schools and childcare settings can also access the e-bug resources to help with teaching around prevention of infections <https://www.e-bug.eu/>

If you have any questions or queries, or need to report cases of D & V or respiratory illness, please contact the Community Infection Prevention and Control team on **01204 390982**.

Yours sincerely,



Anna Anobile

Team Leader, Community Infection Prevention and Control Team