

3 Oct 2016

To: All Principals

INCREASE IN VIRAL GASTROENTERITIS (VGE) CASES IN SCHOOLS

Current Situation

Viral gastroenteritis (VGE) is commonly known as “stomach flu” and outbreaks have been periodically reported in educational institutions. MOH would like to alert you to an observed increase in the number of VGE cases reported in schools. We would like to remind schools to familiarize themselves with measures to minimise the disease transmission when outbreaks occur.

Viral Gastroenteritis

2 VGE is usually caused by viruses such as norovirus and rotavirus. They are highly contagious pathogens that can affect children with symptoms of vomiting, diarrhoea and abdominal pain. A person can be exposed and infected with the virus through: 1) eating food or drinking liquids that are contaminated with the pathogens; 2) touching surfaces or objects contaminated with the pathogens then putting fingers in mouth; or 3) inhaling and swallowing aerosolised vomit containing the viral particles.

Management of VGE cases and outbreak

3 Schools are advised to inform MOH and MOE of any cluster of VGE cases. All VGE cases should be notified to MOH via email to ReportIDCluster@moh.gov.sg. Schools should also inform parents promptly when an outbreak occurs.

Measures

4 In view of the increased number of VGE cases, we would like to alert all schools to step up health and hygiene measures, including good hand washing procedures. Schools should continue to be vigilant for students presenting with diarrhoea or vomiting symptoms. Equipment and surfaces which students may come into contact with must be routinely cleaned.

5 It is also essential that schools work closely with parents to reinforce good hygiene habits at home and for parents to care for their symptomatic children at home to prevent disease transmission in schools. We have provided Information on prevention and control

measures in the attached Annexes (I: for students; II: for staff; III: for food handlers; IV: for cleaners).

6 Thank you for your efforts and understanding. We seek your support in keeping the environment safe and clean.



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SIMPLE STEPS TO KEEP OUR SCHOOL

SAFE & HEALTHY

Norovirus can be contagious. It takes effort to control the spread of norovirus. Everyone in the school can play a part to keep norovirus at bay. Students can follow these simple steps to keep everyone in school in the pink of health.



1 OH STOMACH WOES
Suffering from vomiting and diarrhoea? Seek medical attention early and stay at home until better.

2 UNTIMELY CALLS OF NATURE
Experiencing the symptoms in school? Inform a teacher and go to the sick bay immediately. Seek medical attention and stay at home until better.



3 BE HYGIENE CONSCIOUS
Practise good personal hygiene. Wash hands with soap and water, especially before eating and after visiting the toilet.



YOU ARE GOOD TO GO!
Staying healthy, being happy.

SIMPLE STEPS TO KEEP OUR SCHOOL

SAFE & HEALTHY

Norovirus can be contagious. It takes effort to control the spread of norovirus. Everyone in the school can play a part to keep norovirus at bay. School staff can follow these simple steps to keep everyone in school in the pink of health.



1 OH STOMACH WOES

Suffering from vomiting and diarrhoea? Seek medical attention early and stay at home until better.



2 BE EAGLE EYED

Any members of the school suffering from gastroenteritis symptoms, e.g. vomiting, diarrhoea should be separated immediately in the sick bay, and are recommended to seek medical attention early and stay at home until better.



3 BE CONSCIENTIOUS

Environmental surfaces that the students come into constant contact with should be cleaned frequently with diluted bleach. Any surfaces contaminated with vomitus or faeces should be cleaned and disinfected immediately with diluted bleach as well.



4 BE HYGIENE CONSCIOUS

Practise good personal hygiene. Wash hands with soap and water, especially before eating and after visiting the toilet.



YOU ARE GOOD TO GO!

Staying healthy, being happy.

Ensuring SAFE & GOOD FOOD *for you and me!*



Norovirus can be contagious. It takes effort to control the spread of norovirus. Everyone in the school can play a part to keep norovirus at bay. Food handlers can follow these simple steps to keep everyone in school in the pink of health.



Stay at home, when unwell

Food handlers who are ill with diarrhoea, vomiting and fever should stay at home until fully recovered.



No bare hands, on my food

Avoid touching ready-to-eat foods, such as fruits and vegetables, with bare hands.



Keep it clean, spick and span

Use food-grade sanitizers to clean surfaces that come into contact with food, such as chopping boards, after each use.



Wash them well, don't slip up

Carefully rinse fruits and vegetables before preparing and serving them.



Wash them clean, don't be lazy

Wash hands with soap and water after visiting the toilet and before preparing or handling food.



Raw or cooked, keep them apart

Separate raw food and cooked food appropriately in order to avoid cross-contamination.



Check the heat, make it right

Cook food thoroughly and keep them at appropriate temperatures (>60°C for hot food, <5°C for cold food).

Be vigilant, be tireless at cleaning.

Toilets should be cleaned thoroughly, paying special attention to frequently touched surfaces such as toilet cubicles, door handles, taps and sinks. These surfaces should be disinfected daily.

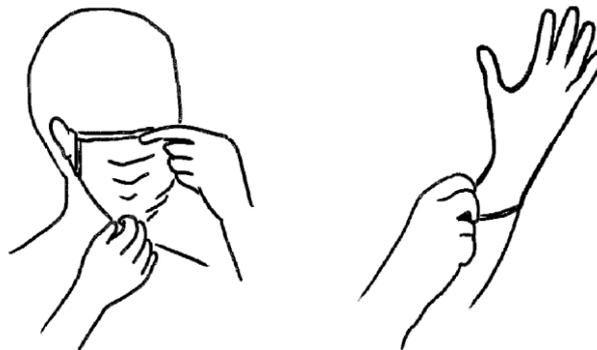
Staff who are suffering from gastroenteritis symptoms, e.g. vomiting, diarrhoea are recommended to seek medical attention early and stay at home.

Guidelines for Disinfecting Surfaces Contaminated by Vomitus, Faeces, Etc.

Infectious waste is defined as waste that is capable of causing disease. For the purpose of preventing transmission of norovirus, proper clean-up of vomitus and faeces is critical. Cleaning should be carried out immediately to minimize exposure of staff and students to the waste. The contaminated area should be cordoned off from other students until disinfection is completed.

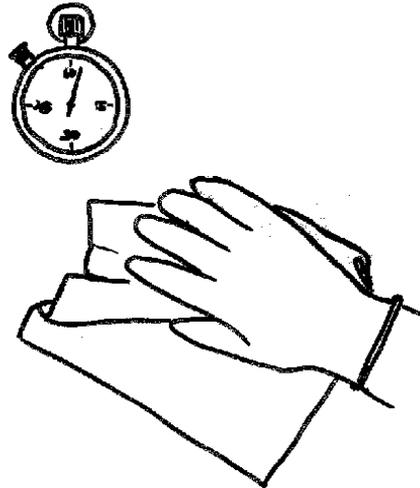


1. Prepare a **fresh**[§] 10% solution of 5.25% sodium hypochlorite (1 part of household bleach solution to 9 parts of water).



2. Put on **appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)** e.g. disposable rubber gloves and surgical mask when handling the clean-up of infectious waste like vomitus and faeces. The rubber gloves and surgical mask are to be discarded after each use.

[§] Dilutions should be made just before use, as sodium hypochlorite solutions will deteriorate. It must also be stored away from heat and light.



>10 Seconds

3. Wipe away the infectious waste using **disposable paper towels** soaked in dilute detergent. The surface should be wiped for >10 seconds.
4. The contaminated paper towels should then be placed within two layers of plastic bags, properly sealed, then discarded into the refuse bin situated away from the school population.



>1 Minute

5. Clean the contaminated area with sodium hypochlorite solution. The sodium hypochlorite solution should be applied for >1 minute on the surface. Ensure that the contaminated area and nearby exposed surfaces are cleaned thoroughly.
6. Disinfect cleaning equipment as follows :
 - i. Flush the dirty water into the toilet bowl;
 - ii. Discard wiping cloths, etc. if contaminated with infectious waste as described in (5);
 - iii. Mops, buckets and other equipment used to clean up the infectious waste must be disinfected by soaking in 10% sodium hypochlorite solution (1 part household bleach with

9 parts water) after use, rinsed thoroughly and dried. The solution should be promptly disposed of by flushing into the toilet bowl.

7. Double-bag the gloves and mask and discard into the refuse bin.
8. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after the clean-up.