

Advice for students, staff and parents.

Gastroenteritis (tummy bug)

At this time of year viral tummy bugs are common in the community and can be easily spread in places where people share common spaces such as school and colleges.

Below is some information about the illness and necessary precautions to reduce the spread of illness at school and home.

What is it?

Gastroenteritis (tummy bug, Gastro) is an infection caused by pathogens such as viruses, bacteria or other organisms. The infection causes diarrhoea (runny, watery bowel motions or poo) and vomiting. Children may feel sick (nausea) and have a fever or tummy pains.

How do people get it?

A person can catch the pathogen when they touch something which has been in contact with the diarrhoea or vomit of an infected person.

Because gastro is easily spread within schools and colleges, the most important precautions against catching Gastro are excluding students/staff that are unwell, careful handwashing after the toilet and before handling or eating food and cleaning and disinfection of toilets with chlorine bases products.

How can I help prevent spread of infectious illness to others?

- **Exclusion** – Staff or students who are or have been unwell should not be at school or attend group activities and social events until vomiting and diarrhoea has completely stopped for at least 48 hours. People can still be infectious when symptoms improve.
- **Thorough hand washing and drying**- encourage staff and students to wash their hands regularly. Clean hands are the single most important factor in preventing the spread of germs. Wash hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and warm water and dry them for 20 seconds with single use paper towels. Hands should be washed before preparing food and eating or visiting the toilet.
- **Disinfection**- Viruses can live on surfaces contaminated by vomit/faeces for 1-2 weeks, therefore:
 - Surfaces in toilets and bathrooms should be cleaned regularly with chlorine based disinfectant (bleach). Mix one part bleach with nine parts water.
 - Wash any contaminated clothes and linen on a high temperature wash and machine dry if possible.
 - Open windows and ventilate rooms where people have been ill.

If staff or parents are worried about their or their child's symptoms or have an underlying condition that makes them vulnerable to severe illness, they should telephone Healthline 0800 611 116 or their own GP for further advice.

If you would like further information please phone National Public Health Service on (04) 590-9002
TeWhatuOra.govt.nz