



**TO: Schools and Care Homes**

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Date as post mark

Dear Colleagues

## **NOROVIRUS SEASON**

We are writing ahead of the approaching norovirus season to ask for your help this winter, to reduce the spread of norovirus. We hope the following points help to minimise the risk of outbreaks in your community establishments. We are also writing to GPs, district nurses and pharmacists.

As you will know, norovirus causes viral gastroenteritis which is characterised by the sudden onset of vomiting and/or diarrhoea. It can spread rapidly in closed environments such as schools and nursing homes. However, most people do not require treatment and recover at home within one or two days.

Norovirus is easily transmitted from person to person and by consuming contaminated food or water or by contact with contaminated surfaces or objects.

If someone develops symptoms of norovirus please help to avoid further spread in the community by reminding their parent or carer of the following points.

People with symptoms of norovirus should:

- stay away from work or school until **free of symptoms for at least 48 hours**
- drink plenty to replace lost fluids. If symptoms persist (more than 48 hours) phone the GP or NHS Direct 0845 46 47 for advice
- wash hands thoroughly with soap and water regularly, particularly after toilet visits and before eating. **Alcohol hand gel is not effective against norovirus**
- avoid visiting friends or relatives in hospital or residential care homes as there is a real risk of spreading the infection to others
- stay at home, ensure personal hygiene is good, particularly hand-washing, and avoid contact with others where possible
- do not handle or prepare food for other people until symptom free for a minimum period of 48 hours
- as you may know, the elderly and the very young can sometimes get a more severe infection the GP or NHS Direct 0845 46 47 for advice

Information on norovirus infection is available on the Health Protection Agency website or by visiting:

<http://www.hpa.org.uk/Topics/InfectiousDiseases/InfectionsAZ/Norovirus/>

Thank you for your assistance.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V Pearson'.

**Dr Virginia Pearson**  
**JOINT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH**  
**NHS DEVON/DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL**