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10 December 2019

For attention of:  
Directors of Public Health (Cumbria and Lancashire)

Dear Colleague

**Re: Increase in diarrhoea and vomiting in school aged children**

We are currently experiencing increased reporting of diarrhoea and vomiting in school aged children consistent with viral gastroenteritis. This is often caused by Norovirus, a frequent cause of vomiting and diarrhoea in the community during the winter.

The most common symptom of Norovirus is vomiting. Diarrhoea tends to be short-lived and less severe than with other causes of gastroenteritis. Other symptoms include nausea, abdominal cramps, headache, muscle aches, chills and fever. The illness is usually self-limiting in nature and gets better without antibiotics, which are not appropriate for viral illnesses. Symptoms usually last between one and three days.

**Those reporting diarrhoea and vomiting should exclude themselves from school until 48 hours after the vomiting and/or diarrhoea have stopped.** This is an important control measure which aims to limit the spread of this infection to others. Any decision to close a school is the responsibility of the school involved. The judgement and decision whether the educational institution should be closed or not depends on the capacity and capability of the school to continue delivering education safely to their pupils.

The following resources are available for schools and other childcare facilities to use when responding to increased activity of diarrhoea and vomiting.

**Public Health England: Health protection in schools and other childcare facilities**  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-protection-in-schools-and-other-childcare-facilities>

**e-Bug**

e-Bug is a Public Health England resource developed for schools to teach children about microbes, infection, and how to prevent their spread. This resource includes ready to use lesson plans which are aligned with the national curriculum.

<https://www.e-bug.eu/>

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Astbury', with a horizontal line underneath.

Dr John Astbury  
Head of Health Protection  
PHE North West – Cumbria and Lancashire