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Norfolk, Suffolk & Cambridgeshire
Health Protection Unit

Norfolk Health Protection Team

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Dear Colleague

We have had reports from a number of schools in Norfolk about influenza-like illness, as well as illness causing diarrhoea and vomiting, both affecting children. We do not have any laboratory results on this illness yet. There are reports of similar illnesses from elsewhere in England and Wales.

Investigation of the initial cases outside Norfolk has shown the infections to be due respectively to Influenza B Virus and Norovirus.

I am writing to provide you with information about the viruses, the symptoms and how they should be managed, together with advice on minimising further spread of the disease.

These are normal winter illnesses and we are not recommending any specific actions for schools other than that affected children should stay at home and good hygiene should be encouraged within schools.

These infections are not notifiable diseases, meaning that schools are under no obligation to inform the Health Protection Unit if they are affected.

If you have any queries please contact Norfolk Health Protection Unit (HPU) on 01603 307 317.

Yours sincerely

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

Dr Pat Nair, BSc MBBS LRCP MRCS FRCPath MFPHM

Director of Norfolk, Suffolk & Cambridgeshire Health Protection Unit

**INFORMATION SHEET:
Influenza B and Norovirus Infections In Norfolk Schools**

Influenza B

Symptoms include sore throat, aches and pains, and a high temperature and sometimes vomiting of a feeling of nausea. The illness usually lasts for a few days. Outbreaks with similar symptoms have been reported in schools across the country.

Influenza B is milder than the more common Influenza A virus and is more likely to affect children and younger adults. Older people could have come across the strain previously, so may already have some immunity to it.

The Health Protection Unit is advising parents of children with symptoms, that the children should stay at home, take paracetamol or ibuprofen and drink plenty of fluids. Children should only return to school when they feel better.

The virus is not usually associated with complications but parents should seek the advice from their GP if they are concerned about worsening symptoms.

The key to avoiding flu is careful hand-washing and the careful disposal of tissues used to cover the mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing or blowing your nose. People with flu should stay away from work or school to avoid infecting others.

Norovirus

Norovirus is commonly known as winter vomiting disease, and as this name suggests its symptoms are sickness and also diarrhoea. There is always a peak of activity of Norovirus infection in Winter and outbreaks in schools at this time of year is not uncommon.

The infection is the most common cause of gastroenteritis and affects approximately 1 million people in the UK each year.

Norovirus is easily transmitted from one person to another. The symptoms usually last from 12 to 60 hours and will start with the sudden onset of nausea followed by projectile vomiting and diarrhoea. Both pupils and staff should be informed that they should not return to school until 72 hours after symptoms disappear.

Good hygiene is important to prevent others from becoming infected - this includes thorough hand-washing, especially after toilet visits. Any contaminated surfaces should be thoroughly disinfected after an episode of illness.