



Department of Health

50 Lonsdale Street
Melbourne Victoria 3000
Telephone: 1300 650 172
GPO Box 4057
Melbourne Victoria 3001
www.health.vic.gov.au
DX 210081

Dear parents and caregivers,

I am writing to you to let you know that we have seen many more children in childcare become sick with gastroenteritis (or gastro) than is usual at this time of the year.

Most gastro in childcare is viral and infection resolves on its own. It can, however, have more severe outcomes for some people, such as the elderly or newborns. If you are concerned about the length or severity of symptoms, please call NURSE-ON-CALL on 1300 60 60 24 at any time or visit your GP.

It is very easy to spread this infection, so I'd like you to be aware of the symptoms; know how to look after everyone in your household; and importantly, how to stop passing this infection on to others.

Symptoms can take up to three days to develop and usually last between one or two days and sometimes longer.

- Symptoms include nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, fever, abdominal pain, headache and muscle aches. These may be more severe in the elderly and very young.

Ways to help stop spreading this illness:

- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds to stop the spread of infection.
- While effective against coronavirus, alcohol-based hand sanitisers are not effective against many of the viruses that cause gastroenteritis.
- Make sure children keep drinking fluids when sick to prevent dehydration from vomiting or diarrhoea.
- Clean surfaces, benchtops, bathrooms and toys regularly so the infection does not spread to others in your house.
- If anyone is sick with vomiting or diarrhoea, everyone should remain at home until their symptoms have stopped for 48 hours, as you all may still spread the infection during this time.
 - This means that children going to other schools will need to stay home, and you too will need to stay home from work.
 - Please do not visit any family or friends while there is sickness in your house and wait until 48 hours after everyone is better before visiting someone in hospital or aged care.

Although this infection will likely only last a few days, it is very unpleasant and very easy to pass onto other people, so please follow this advice to keep your family and other families protected.

Yours sincerely,

Adjunct Clinical Professor Brett Sutton
Chief Health Officer
Department of Health
19 March 2021