



Guidance for Mitigation for Acute Gastroenteritis in Community Congregate Settings

Background

Acute gastroenteritis is inflammation of the stomach, small intestine, or large intestine, leading to a combination of symptoms related to gastrointestinal symptoms. Acute gastroenteritis can be caused by several different infectious agents including viruses, bacteria and parasites and can also be called “the stomach flu” (although it is not related to respiratory influenza). Acute gastroenteritis usually only lasts for 14 or fewer days. There are several prevention measures that can be put in place to prevent the spread acute gastroenteritis in community congregate settings including proper food preparation, good hand hygiene practices, effective cleaning and disinfection and following [contact](#) and [standard precautions](#).

Symptoms Associated with Acute Gastroenteritis:

Symptoms associated with acute gastroenteritis include:

- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Nausea
- Stomach pain/abdominal cramping
- Fever
- Headache
- Body aches

How long does it take from exposure to onset of symptoms?

The incubation period for acute gastroenteritis varies based on the infectious agent causing the symptoms, however, a person usually develops symptoms 12-48 hours following exposure. You are most contagious when you have symptoms like vomiting and during the first few days after you feel better. Symptoms typically last 1-14 days and subside on their own in healthy individuals.

Risk Factors Associated with Contracting Acute Gastroenteritis:

Risk factors associated with acute gastroenteritis include:

- Eating in a place where food has been handled by someone with a gastroenteritis infection or the food has been in contact with contaminated water or surfaces.,
- Attending preschool or a childcare center,
- Living in close quarters with others, such as in a skilled nursing facility or congregate living setting,
- Staying in hotels, resorts, cruise ships or other destinations with many people in close quarters,
- Having contact with someone who has symptoms related to acute gastroenteritis,
- Lack of access to resources for conducting proper hand hygiene regularly.

Immediate Next Steps for Case Treatment and Monitoring:

Upon the identification of a resident or staff with symptoms consistent with acute gastroenteritis:

1. If a staff member develops symptoms, ask them to return home. All staff should be excluded from work for a minimum of 48 hours after the resolution of symptoms. If the staff member works in dietary and handles food, they should receive a note from their provider to return to work, when possible. If a resident is displaying symptoms, they should be isolated away from others and, if possible, have their

own bathroom. If having a separate bathroom for infected residents is not possible, a separate stall may be an alternative that can reduce contact with the infected individuals' feces.

- 2. Facility staff should ensure proper cleaning and disinfection is occurring after each use by the case.** To disinfect, use a chlorine bleach solution comprised of 5 to 25 tablespoons of bleach in 1 gallon of water, or use an EPA-registered cleaning agent: <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-g-antimicrobial-products-registered-epa-claims-against-norovirus-feline>

Learn more on the difference between cleaning and disinfecting here:

https://www.cdc.gov/hygiene/pdf/331782-a_cleaning_sanitizing_disinfecting_508.pdf

- 3.** Following a diagnosis, residents should be placed under [contact precautions](#) (all staff should wear gloves when handling or cleaning any bodily fluids) and avoid contact with other residents for the duration of their illness.
- 3.** Residents should continue to be monitored for signs of dehydration which include decreased urination, dry mouth and throat, and dizziness when standing up. If this occurs, they should be referred to a healthcare provider or transferred to the hospital.
- 4.** Facilities should report clusters of acute gastroenteritis to the Special Populations team at the Chicago Department of Public Health to report any cases of here: <https://redcap.link/specpopreport>

Preventing Acute Gastroenteritis:

Acute gastroenteritis can be very contagious, depending on the infectious agent causing illness, but facilities can take steps to stop it from spreading to others by:

- Providing access to resources and messaging for staff and residents to conduct hand hygiene, especially after using the bathroom, after changing diapers, and before eating or preparing food
- Ensuring that contaminated areas such as bathrooms are routinely being cleaned and disinfected with bleach products. Please refer to the [EPA list G](#) to find instructions on each specific bleach product.
- Washing soiled or contaminated laundry in hot water
- Handline and prepare food safely, and restricting individuals who are symptomatic from being involved in food preparation: Learn more at [Food Safety Home Page | CDC](#)
- Adopting policies that encourage ill staff members to stay home.

Organization	Contact Information:
CDPH Community Congregate Settings Team	Email: SpecialPops@cityofchicago.org Reporting Link: https://redcap.link/specpopreport