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Västra Götalandsregionen
Smittskydd Västra Götaland

For guardians

Diarrhea and/or vomiting among preschool children

Getting infected with a stomach flu with diarrhea and vomiting as a result is common among preschool children. The infection is easily spread and can make people who have been in close contact with each other sick. Stomach flu can come on quickly and usually goes away within a few days. Viruses are the most common cause of stomach flu among preschool children. Viral infections are highly contagious, often affecting multiple people in the same area in a short period of time. Calicivirus infections are sometimes called the "winter vomiting bug", but you can get sick throughout the year. Other causes of diarrhea are bacteria or intestinal parasites.

Pathways and spread of infection

Infection can occur by being close to sick people or by infectious agents from feces and vomit getting into the mouth through pathways such as hands, towels, toys, handles and other objects. Hands are a common cause for the spread of infection. You can also get infected by improperly handled foods and drinks. Stomach flus usually take 1–3 days from infection to causing feelings of illness. For infections from other causes, the onset of illness may take longer.

Should my child stay at home?

Yes. Children with diarrhea or vomiting are not allowed inside the preschool premises. Your child can return to the preschool when they have regained their normal appetite and if they have not vomited or had diarrhea for at least 48 hours or 2 days. During stomach flu season, the spread of infection in preschools can be limited by keeping siblings of sick children at home.

Hygiene advice

These measures can limit the spread of infection:

- Wash your hands with soap and water after using the toilet, after changing diapers and before eating.
- Do not handle food if you are ill.
- Close the toilet lid before flushing.
- Put used diapers in a plastic bag, tie them up and throw them away immediately.
- Keep your sinks, taps, toilet seat and flush button clean.
- Avoid sharing the same hand towels in the family, hand towels should be changed daily.
- Wash your child's security blanket and soft toys.
- Boil their pacifiers and replace or boil their toothbrushes when they have recovered.

Diarrhea after having been abroad

If you have diarrhea or other stomach problems after traveling abroad, contact your health care provider for possible testing.

For more information on the stomach flu, read more on [1177 Vårdguiden](#).