



Infection Prevention October Newsletter

This month's IPC newsletter is focusing on gastrointestinal illnesses. In September's newsletter we looked at Norovirus which is a common viral infection often referred to as the winter vomiting bug.

Audit your PPE- Much of the Covid- issued PPE is now out of date. Unfortunately, this means a large volume of waste for many care settings but please don't be tempted to use this PPE past the use by date as loss of the integrity of the product and efficacy may put residents and staff at risk.

Flu and Covid-19 Vaccination is safe and very effective. It is impossible for the vaccines to give you the illness as the vaccinations are not live vaccines. The vaccinations are free for all health and social care staff and may be offered through your employer. However, if your employer does not offer this you can go to your local pharmacy or contact your GP surgery who will be able to help you. If you have any concerns regarding vaccination or think you may not be eligible, please speak to a health care provider who should be able to help you make an informed choice.

Gastrointestinal infections are viral, bacterial, or parasitic infections. They inflame the gastrointestinal tract and involve both the stomach and small intestine. Symptoms can include diarrhoea, vomiting and abdominal pain. Most gastroenteritis is self-limiting (e.g. norovirus) but some may require treatment depending on the cause of the infection. A GP or UKHSA may require a stool sample to decide the best course of treatment.

E. coli O157 is a bacterial infection which can be unpleasant and serious, occasionally can lead life threatening complications. Symptoms can persist for up to 2 weeks. E. coli O157 is found in the gut and faeces of many animals, particularly cattle. Further information can be found in this [link](#). There is no specific treatment for E. coli O157, antibiotics are not recommended as these could increase the risk of complications and most people will recover at home. However, it is important to look out for the signs and symptoms of dehydration, bloody diarrhoea and contact GP if you have any concerns. Most people will not be contagious after a week however some people remain contagious for several months. Health and social care staff should speak to environmental health prior to returning to work to ensure it is safe. This also applies to the household they live with. It is important to ensure strict hand hygiene, isolation, environmental decontamination and recording of bowel movements during this time.

Rotavirus is a viral infection and can cause sickness and diarrhoea. In most cases will be self-limiting clearing up within a few days however, for some people this will not be the case and may require medical intervention. Rotavirus is highly contagious and often transmitted via faecal oral route and symptoms usually develop around 48 hours from exposure. It is important to ensure strict hand hygiene, isolation, environmental decontamination and recording of bowel movements during this time. Further information can be found via this [link](#).

Giardiasis is a parasitic stomach bug that causes diarrhoea, wind and bloating. Giardiasis will usually resolve after a week or so if treated. Giardiasis is commonly transmitted through faecal oral route, animals or swallowing contaminated water, food or drinks. It usually takes around 1-2 weeks after initial infection for symptoms to appear and duration is 2 weeks up to 6 weeks. People with weakened immune systems may have symptoms longer. A stool sample will be required to diagnose Giardiasis and this infection in most cases requires antibiotics. Giardiasis can live outside of the body for weeks or even months. It is important to ensure strict hand hygiene, isolation, environmental decontamination and recording of bowel movements during this time. More information can be found via this [link](#).