

Vomiting Events in an Eating Area – Cleanup Advice

The most common causes of vomiting are highly infectious viruses such as norovirus. A single episode of vomiting can potentially infect large numbers of people across large eating areas. The risk is greatest for people at the table where a person (often a child) vomits.

Because the viruses are highly infectious, inappropriate cleaning techniques can spread the virus throughout the eating area. Using the same cleaning cloth and ineffective cleaning and sanitising agents are usually to blame.

Actions to take to minimise spread of infection

1. Wear disposable gloves during the cleaning process. They will need to be changed if they become contaminated by vomit before proceeding to the next cleanup step.
2. Immediately discard any food that may have been struck by droplets of vomit.
3. Wipe up vomit and dispose of the cleaning cloth. Replace gloves.

If paper towels are available it is often easier and more effective to place a paper towel over the vomit and to then carefully remove the paper towel and contents.

When wiping up and doing further cleaning (Steps 4 and 5) work from clean areas towards the most contaminated areas to minimise spread of infectious material. Place contaminated table cloths and napkins into a plastic bag for transport to laundry.

4. Use a detergent and hot water to wipe down the area where vomit was present so that no evidence of vomit is visible. Dispose of all cleaning cloths. If a mop is used, it will need to be washed in hot water and detergent, and then dipped in 0.1% free chlorine (use 1 part standard household bleach to 10 parts water).
5. Wipe down affected areas with a cloth dampened with 0.1% free chlorine. Dispose of the cleaning cloth. Allow surfaces to dry before the area is reused.
6. Table cloths and napkins will require laundering at a high temperature, preferably separately, and then dried in the sun or on the hot cycle of a clothes dryer.
7. Immediately after clean up is completed, staff involved in the cleanup must remove and dispose of gloves, then thoroughly wash their hands for 30 seconds

with soap/handwash and warm water, and thoroughly dry their hands before returning to normal duties.

8. Find out if the sick person has vomited or 'cleaned up' in the bathroom. If so, clean the area (especially taps and door handles) as described in Step 5 above.

Other Resources

For further advice please contact your local community health centre or nearest Public Health Unit, or contact Queensland Health information phone number 13HEALTH.

Related Content

Viral gastroenteritis outbreaks: information for supervisors in the childcare and hospitality industries

<http://www.health.qld.gov.au/ph/documents/cdb/26888.pdf>

Gastroenteritis fact sheet

http://access.health.qld.gov.au/hid/DigestiveHealth/Gastroenteritis/gastroenteritis_fs.asp

Norovirus fact sheet

http://access.health.qld.gov.au/hid/InfectionsandParasites/ViralInfections/norovirus_fs.asp

Rotavirus fact sheet

http://access.health.qld.gov.au/hid/InfectionsandParasites/ViralInfections/rotavirus_fs.asp