



Shropshire Council's Health Protection Team would like to remind nurseries and early years settings of key infection prevention and control (IPC) measures. UKHSA has reported a seasonal increase in enterovirus, including viral meningitis, across the West Midlands, with clusters linked to early years settings and occurring alongside diarrhoea and vomiting outbreaks. As a precaution, please review the advice below with your staff and share it with parents and carers where appropriate.

1. Background

Enterovirus is the most common cause of viral meningitis in the UK. Cases of enterovirus follow a seasonal pattern, with increases in cases, including of viral meningitis, starting in June. Viral meningitis is most common in children, particularly the very young, with the highest incidence in those under 3 months old. Meningitis is an infection of the protective layers that cover the brain and spinal cord. It can be very serious and even life-threatening if not treated quickly.

- › [Meningitis – overview and symptoms \(NHS\)](#)
- › [Health protection in children and young people settings, including education \(UKHSA\)](#)

2. Key infection prevention and control measures

Please make sure the following measures are in place and reinforced, especially during any period of increased illness:

- **Hand hygiene** – wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm water, particularly after nappy changing, after toileting and before handling food, and supervise children with handwashing. Alcohol hand gel is not a substitute, as it is less effective against enteroviruses and norovirus.
- **Cleaning and disinfection** – regularly clean frequently-touched surfaces, toys and equipment. During diarrhoea and vomiting illness, use a chlorine-based (bleach) disinfectant, and clean up any spillages of vomit or faeces promptly using the correct procedure.
- **Nappy changing and toileting** – follow hygiene procedures, clean changing areas between each use, and dispose of waste correctly.
- **Personal protective equipment (PPE)** – wear gloves and an apron when dealing with blood or bodily fluids and wash hands afterwards.
- **Ventilation and food hygiene** – let fresh air into indoor spaces where possible and maintain safe food handling and preparation.

- › [Preventing, controlling and cleaning – guidance for settings \(UKHSA\)](#)

3. Exclusion and managing children who are unwell

Children or staff with diarrhoea and/or vomiting should stay away from the setting until 48 hours after their last episode. Children who are unwell should not attend, and if a child becomes unwell during the day, please contact their parents or carers. For other infections, follow the recommended UKHSA exclusion periods.

› [Public health exclusion periods in children and young people's settings](#)

4. Recognising meningitis and advising parents and carers

Because viral meningitis can look like bacterial meningitis in its early stages, staff and parents / carers should be alert to the signs and seek urgent medical help (call 999 or NHS 111) if a child becomes seriously unwell – do not wait for a rash to appear.

In babies and young children, warning signs can include a high temperature, being unusually sleepy, floppy or difficult to wake, irritability or a high-pitched cry, refusing feeds, dislike of bright light, a stiff neck, rapid breathing, cold hands and feet, and a rash that does not fade when pressed with a glass. A child can be seriously ill without showing all of these signs, so trust your instincts and seek help early.

› [Meningitis – symptoms and when to get help \(NHS\)](#)

5. Reporting outbreaks

Please report 2 or more linked cases of diarrhoea and/or vomiting, or any other suspected outbreak, to the Shropshire Council Health Protection Team, shropshirepublichealth@shropshire.gov.uk, for advice and support.

› [Managing outbreaks and incidents in children and young people settings \(UKHSA\)](#)



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