

Gastrointestinal Outbreak Decontamination Protocol

In the event of an outbreak of gastroenteritis, special consideration must be given to the cleaning of areas contaminated from either a vomiting or fecal accident. The area should be cordoned off and cleaned immediately. Failing to properly clean contaminated areas will lead to rapid spread and continuation of outbreaks.

Cleaning vomit and feces

People who clean up vomit or feces should minimize the risk of infection to themselves and others by:

- Wearing disposable gloves, standard procedure mask (or face shield), and a plastic disposable apron or water-resistant gown.
- Using paper towels to soak up excess liquid. Transfer these and any solid matter directly into a plastic garbage bag.
- Cleaning the soiled area with detergent and water, using a “single-use” cloth.
- Disinfecting the contaminated area with one of the recommended disinfectant solutions (see following).
- Depositing disposable gloves, masks, and aprons into a garbage bag and reusable aprons/ gowns into a laundry bag.
- Washing hands thoroughly using soap and warm running water for at least 30 seconds.

If cleaning up vomit in food preparation areas:

- Disinfect the area (including vertical surfaces) with one of the recommended disinfectant solutions (see following).

- Dispose of any exposed food (food that has been handled by an infected person or food that may have been exposed to the virus by someone vomiting nearby).
- Wash all dishes, utensils, and trays in a commercial dishwasher, or wash and rinse by hand in hot water and then rinse in one of the recommended disinfectant solutions (see following).

Recommended disinfectant solutions

1. Hypochlorite (bleach) solution

The recommended level of 1:10 bleach solution is made by adding 1 part of household bleach (5.25% hypochlorite) to 9 parts water (or 1/2 cup of bleach to 4.5 cups of water, or 450 ml of bleach to 4 litres of water). This will give an approximately 5000 ppm hypochlorite solution.

- Hypochlorite is corrosive and may bleach fabrics. Mixing bleach with other cleaning/ disinfecting agents can be dangerous. Never mix bleach with other products unless the product label specifically allows it.
- Applying the bleach solution to surfaces and leaving to air dry should provide adequate contact time.
- The solution should be freshly made to be most effective. Don't use diluted bleach solutions that are over 24 hours old.

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2. Accelerated Hydrogen Peroxide (AHP) solution

There is documented evidence suggesting that this product (trade name “Virox”) is also effective against Norovirus, a common cause of viral gastrointestinal outbreaks in residential care facilities, schools, daycares, and other institutions.

- Use as recommended in the product use and safety information
- A minimum contact time of 5 minutes is necessary to be effective against gastrointestinal viruses.

Note: There is insufficient evidence at this time to recommend a disinfectant other than the two listed above where a viral agent (e.g., Norovirus) is known or suspected to be the cause of a gastrointestinal illness or outbreak. Norovirus is considered to be very resistant to many other disinfectants commonly in use.

ALERT: Accelerated Hydrogen Peroxide solutions differ from a basic hydrogen peroxide cleaning solution.

Accelerated Hydrogen Peroxide (AHP) is a patented cleaning and disinfectant solution developed by Virox Technologies (also comes in wipes). It is a combination of commonly used ingredients that when mixed with low levels of hydrogen peroxide dramatically increases its germ-killing potency and cleaning performance. It is sold by various distributors so you will see different brand names. The important ingredient to look for is the accelerated hydrogen peroxide. Information on AHP products is also available on the Virox web site at www.virox.com

Treatment of specific materials

Contaminated linens, clothes, towels, cloths, etc., should be washed in the hottest water available and detergent using the maximum cycle length, and then machine-dried on the hot cycle.

Vinyl-covered furniture or mattresses should be thoroughly cleaned with detergent and hot water then wiped down with one of the recommended disinfectant solutions.

Soft furnishings or cloth-covered mattresses should be thoroughly cleaned with detergent and hot water. For disinfection, they can be placed outside in the sun for a few hours. As this is not usually feasible, after being cleaned they should be steam cleaned (strongly recommended) or disinfected with one of the recommended disinfectant solutions (Note: some fabrics may not be bleach resistant).

Contaminated carpets should be cleaned with detergent and hot water then disinfected with one of the recommended disinfectant solutions (Note: some carpets may not be bleach resistant) or steam cleaned using the hottest water available.

Contaminated hard surfaces should be washed with detergent and water, using a single-use cloth, then disinfected with one of the recommended disinfectant solutions.

Non-disposable mop heads should be laundered in the hottest water available and detergent using the maximum machine cycle length, and then machine-dried on the hot cycle.

Fixtures in bathrooms should be cleaned with detergent and hot water using a single-use cloth, and then disinfected with one of the recommended disinfectant solutions.