

Date: 28 December 2012

Alert No: 11

Treating Winter Infections and Illness

The Health Protection Agency is reporting an increase in Norovirus and Seasonal Influenza (flu) this year. Early recognition and appropriate management are required to protect vulnerable patients and maintain adequate staffing levels. Winter illnesses including **winter vomiting** and seasonal influenza spread rapidly in communal environments.

Norovirus

Community Patients and Service Users

Be aware of signs and symptoms of norovirus in yourselves and your patients. Consider all reports of diarrhoea of two or more episodes, or any episodes of vomiting as potentially infectious.

Risk assess your reason for visiting the patient/client or their clinic appointment. Try to avoid cancelling appointments/visits. Offer visits /appointment at the end of the day. Consider the overall health of the patient/service user particularly those isolated in their own homes. Have they got enough food and fluid? Does their GP/ Community Matron need to be informed?

Inpatients

1. Care for the patient/service user away from others
2. Encourage them to stay in their room and identify toilet for their own use
3. Direct staff and patients/service users to wash their hands with SOAP and WATER before and after contact with the patient or their environment
4. Inform the Infection Control Team
5. Collect a stool specimen (two pots) and request MC+S and Virology
6. Ensure enhanced cleaning of ward and equipment with **Chlor Clean**. Inform domestic services
7. Ensure the affected person drinks adequate fluids - one glass or cup of fluid per hour to prevent dehydration.

Staff Health

If you become unwell with diarrhoea or vomiting stay at home (or if it occurs in shift, inform senior staff and go home immediately.) Do not return to work until 48 hours symptom-free. If in doubt, contact Occupational Health.