

VIRAL GASTROENTERITIS ALERT

Information for General Practitioners

Please distribute this information to all staff in your practice



Health
Western Sydney
Local Health District

1. **Gastrointestinal outbreak notifications have increased in childcare centres in Western Sydney.**
2. **Advise patients with gastroenteritis to not attend childcare centres, as well as hospitals and aged care facilities, until 48 hours after symptoms have resolved.**
3. **Exclude COVID-19 in children who present with gastrointestinal symptoms in combination with respiratory symptoms or fever.**

Gastroenteritis outbreak notifications in childcare centres have increased

- In NSW, nearly 60 outbreaks of gastroenteritis in early childhood education and care (ECEC) centres were reported in October, which is significantly higher than the usual rates at this time of year.
- Very high numbers continue to be reported throughout November. In Western Sydney Local Health District, 8 outbreaks of gastroenteritis in ECEC centres have been reported in November to date.

GPs should reinforce hygiene advice to help prevent spread

- Children and staff with viral gastroenteritis should not attend ECEC centres until at least 48 hours after the resolution of symptoms.
- Remind parents that all family members in households affected by gastroenteritis should avoid visiting hospitals and aged care facilities until at least 48 hours after the last person in the household has recovered.
- GPs may be asked to facilitate testing of stool specimens, to assist in outbreak response and surveillance.

Consider whether COVID-19 testing is indicated

- In addition to respiratory symptoms or fever, COVID-19 may cause gastrointestinal symptoms including diarrhoea, nausea/vomiting and anorexia.
- COVID-19 should be excluded in all patients with gastrointestinal symptoms if associated with respiratory symptoms or fever.

Further Information:

- Information on viral gastroenteritis, including factsheets for patients, are available on the NSW Health website: <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/gastroenteritis/Pages/default.aspx>
- Contact the Western Sydney Public Health Unit: Ph (02) 9840 3603

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Shopna'.

Dr Shopna Bag

Director – Western Sydney Public Health Unit

23 November 2020