

Guidelines for School Absenteeism



The Health Protection and Promotion Act R.S.O.,1990 (HPPA) and Infectious Diseases Protocol requires that the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit conduct surveillance of infectious diseases of public health importance. Windsor-Essex County schools are required to report school absenteeism rates of greater than 10% due to any illness and/or any clusters of illness to the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit.

The Health Unit will investigate to insure that the source of illness is not food- or water-related; conduct surveillance of symptoms and provide recommendations regarding management and follow up.

The following is a checklist to guide schools in the management of increased absenteeism rates:

CHECKLIST	
√	NOTIFICATION
	Report increased absenteeism rates (>10%) daily by telephone to the Health Unit at 519-258-2146 ext. 1420 or 1444. Be prepared to report the following information : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of ill students and ill staff • Total # of students and staff in school • Ages/grades affected by illness • Symptoms (e.g. diarrhea, vomiting, cough, nasal congestion, sore throat) • Location of illness in building (e.g. cafeteria, classroom, entire building) • Any school activities or events prior to illness (e.g. pizza lunch day, school fair, field trip)
	The school, in collaboration with the Health Unit will determine if communication to parents is required
√	INFECTIOUS DISEASE PREVENTION AND CONTROL (IPAC) MEASURES
	Encourage staff and students to stay home when sick.
	Consult with environmental cleaning staff to implement enhanced environmental cleaning measures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use broad spectrum disinfectants, particularly after contamination by faeces or vomit. • Increase cleaning and disinfection frequency in the school, with attention to “high-touch” common areas (e.g., door handles, water fountains, hand rails, elevator buttons, computer keyboards and mouse, table tops and counters, toys, sleep equipment, and washrooms). Observe contact time required (i.e., time required for disinfection to occur) of the disinfectants used. (refer to labels for direction)
	Encourage hand hygiene among staff and students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure bathrooms and classrooms with sinks have warm running water and sufficient supply of soap and paper towels. • If hand sanitizer is available, use 70-90% alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Check for expiry date. • Inform staff and students to increase frequency of proper hand hygiene and follow cough and sneeze etiquette. If tissues are used, then they need to be properly disposed of and hand hygiene needs to be performed afterwards. • Inform staff that children need extra time allowed for proper hand hygiene (time it takes to sing happy birthday). • Post hand washing signs in all washrooms (available on our website or from your School Public Health Nurse) • Glow Germ sessions to teach proper hand washing are available from your School Public Health Nurse by calling 519-258-2146 x 1555 for Healthy Schools intake line or contact your school nurse directly.
	Inform staff and students that they should not share items (e.g. writing utensils, drinking bottles). If items are shared, disinfect the items properly in between uses.

For more information:

- Caring for Kids: Handwashing for Parents and Children: <http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/handwashing>