



Intercare Corporate Group Inc.  
501-5920 Macleod Trail SW  
Calgary, AB  
T2H 0K2  
Tel: (403) 255-4969  
Fax: (403) 252-6591  
www.intercarealberta.com

Email questions or feedback to:  
feedback@intercarealberta.com

Intercare Corporate Group Inc. Group Inc. — “The Heart of Excellence”

# Infection Prevention & Control

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## Infection Control



## Viral Gastroenteritis

Norovirus is on the rise this spring; the following is a timely review of Viral Gastroenteritis.

### What is Viral Gastroenteritis?

Viral gastroenteritis is a stomach illness (including diarrhea and vomiting) in people that is caused by a virus. It is commonly found and can occur year-round. These particular viruses can be easily spread in communal living environments, including care homes. Viruses are very different from bacteria and parasites; they are much smaller in size and are not affected by treatment with antibiotics.

### What are the symptoms of Viral Gastroenteritis illness?

Symptoms of gastroenteritis illness usually include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and some stomach cramping. Sometimes people also have a low-grade fever, chills, headache, muscle aches and a general sense of tiredness. The illness often begins suddenly and the infected person may feel very sick. The illness is usually brief, with symptoms usually lasting only about 1 or 2 days.

### How serious is Viral Gastroenteritis?

Though viral gastroenteritis illness is usually not serious, some people may feel very sick and experience frequent episodes of vomiting or watery diarrhea throughout the day. Most people get better within 1 or 2 days and have no long term health effects related to the illness; however, if the ill person is unable to drink enough liquids to replace the liquids being lost (depleted) due to vomiting and diarrhea, they can become dehydrated and may require special medical attention.

### How do people become infected with Viral Gastroenteritis?

These viruses are found in the stool or vomit of infected people and can be spread easily. With some viruses, ingestion of only 10 -100 virus particles can cause illness. People can become infected with viral gastroenteritis in several ways, including:

- ◆ Eating food or drinking liquids that are contaminated with these viruses;
- ◆ Touching surfaces or objects contaminated with these viruses and then placing their hand into their mouth;
- ◆ Having direct contact with another person who is infected and showing symptoms

### When do symptoms of Viral Gastroenteritis appear?

Symptoms of viral gastroenteritis usually begin suddenly - about 24 to 48 hours after ingestion of the virus - but can appear as early as 12 hours after exposure to the virus. People infected with viral gastroenteritis can typically spread the virus to other people from the moment they begin feeling ill through to 48 hours after diarrhea stops; some people may remain contagious for as long as 2 weeks after their recovery. It is, therefore, of particular importance for people to use good handwashing and other hygienic practices if they have recently recovered from viral gastroenteritis or are in an environment where others are ill with gastroenteritis-like-symptoms.

### What treatment is available for people with Viral Gastroenteritis?

When people are ill with vomiting and diarrhea, they should drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration. Dehydration among the elderly and those who are ill with vomiting/diarrhea can be common. Dehydration is the most serious health effect that can result when ill with viral gastroenteritis. People can reduce their risk of becoming dehydrated when ill by drinking 'oral rehydration' fluids, including juices or water.

### Can Viral Gastroenteritis infections be prevented?

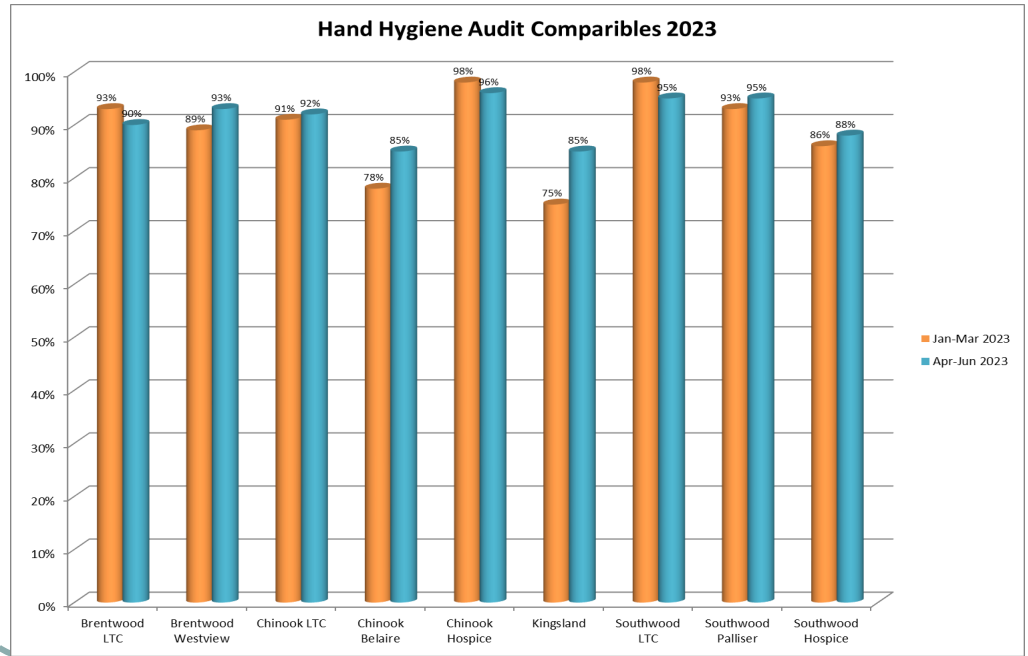
You can decrease your chance of coming in contact with the viruses that cause this illness by following these simple preventive steps:

- ◆ Frequently wash your hands, especially after toilet visits and before eating or preparing food.
- ◆ Do not prepare food if you have symptoms of illness. Instead, try to wait at least 48 hours after symptoms stop before preparing food.
- ◆ Carefully wash fruits and vegetables with clean water before eating.
- ◆ Thoroughly and frequently clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces.
- ◆ Immediately remove and wash clothing or linens that may be contaminated with vomit and/or diarrhea, using hot water and soap.
- ◆ Isolate individuals who are vomiting and/or have diarrhea in a different area from others around them until at least 48 hours after symptoms stop.

## Hand Hygiene Audit Results

Hand Hygiene Auditing is done on a monthly basis at all Intercare sites. During these audits, the “Four (4) Moments of Hand Hygiene” are observed, as well as proper glove use.

The graph below shows results of on-going Hand Hygiene Auditing at Intercare Care Homes.



## Infection Prevention & Control (IPC) Auditing

Throughout May and June all Intercare sites underwent Infection Prevention & Control (IPC) audits by Alberta Health Services (AHS). We are pleased to report that the Intercare sites did very well with these Infection Prevention & Control Audits.

Below you will find a list of ways that you can assist with Infection Prevention & Control compliance.

- ♥ Use proper hand hygiene (wash your hands frequently).
- ♥ Use respiratory hygiene/cough etiquette.
- ♥ Do not visit when not feeling well.
- ♥ Inform the Care Home if you become ill following a recent visit at the Care home.
- ♥ Use a face mask or PPE if required, when visiting.
- ♥ Get recommended vaccinations.
- ♥ Ensure that any perishable food items brought in for your loved one is labeled, if the items are being put into dining room/kitchen fridges.
- ♥ Monitor expiry dates of the food items you have brought in for your loved one and discard expired food items.



- ♥ Assist your loved one by placing personal items in their room in a manner that avoids clutter and ensure placement of the items will allow Housekeeping staff's ability to thoroughly clean your loved one's room.

