



UK Health  
Security  
Agency

# Winter preparedness information for London Education and Childcare Settings

## About the UK Health Security Agency

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) will be responsible for planning, preventing and responding to external health threats, and providing intellectual, scientific and operational leadership at national and local level, as well as on the global stage.

UKHSA will ensure the nation can respond quickly and at greater scale to deal with pandemics and future threats.

UKHSA is an executive agency, sponsored by the Department of Health and Social Care.

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## Introduction

During the winter season, it is important that schools are reminded and updated on important health considerations for their pupils/students, parents/carers and staff.

Pupils and staff in education and childcare settings are particularly susceptible to infections which increase over the winter months, such as acute respiratory illnesses (ARIs) including Respiratory Syncytial Virus and COVID-19, and stomach infections such as norovirus. These can be very infectious and cause outbreaks in settings due to the close contact amongst pupils and staff. The spread of these illnesses can be limited by improving infection control practices within the school.

Young children and/or those with chronic illnesses and neurodevelopmental disorders are also at risk of developing complications from certain vaccine-preventable infections such as measles, flu and COVID-19. It is important that they are fully immunised where eligible to prevent any complications and to reduce the likelihood of outbreaks in education and childcare settings. It is also essential that settings have up to date and easily accessible records of children identified as being in a risk group (**see page 6 – Influenza risk groups – for more information**). This will ensure that a rapid risk assessment regarding the need for post exposure treatment can be considered in the event of individual cases and/or an outbreak situation.

This briefing provides:

1. Key messages for head teachers on winter preparedness.
2. Two checklists on acute respiratory illness and norovirus preparedness including when and how to report outbreaks.
3. Leaflets and further information on acute respiratory illness, norovirus, measles, polio and meningitis.

# Key messages for education and childcare settings on winter preparedness

## 1. Be prepared ✓

- Regularly remind parents to exclude their child from the setting if they have symptoms of acute respiratory illness or diarrhoea and/or vomiting or any other infectious disease.
- Encourage pupils and staff to ensure they are up to date with their UK scheduled vaccines for their age including against measles, mumps and rubella (MMR). The routine UK immunisation schedule can be found [here](#).
- Encourage your pupils and staff to be immunised against seasonal flu and COVID-19, where eligible, and have access to personal protective equipment (PPE) (**see checklist on page 8**).
- Maintain an up to date list of children who are at particular risk of developing serious illness from influenza (as outlined below), so that if there is an outbreak you have all of this information to hand to inform a timely risk assessment.

## 2. Recognise outbreaks ✓

You should consider the possibility of an outbreak where you have two or more cases linked by time and place or an increase in numbers of a particular illness than would be normally expected

## 3. Report outbreaks promptly to your local health protection team seven days a week ✓

Outbreaks of diarrhoea and vomiting should be reported to your [health protection team](#) as soon as they are recognised.

- North West London – 0300 303 0450
- North East and North Central London – 0300 303 0450
- South London – 0300 303 0450

Suspected outbreaks of acute respiratory infection should be reported to the Local Health Protection Team.

# Respiratory infections including COVID-19

You should continue to follow current guidance which describes the measures to manage acute viral respiratory infections in educational/childcare settings (including COVID-19) on a day-to-day basis, and actions to take in the event of an outbreak of acute respiratory illness including COVID-19 within the setting.

[Investigation and management of outbreaks of suspected acute viral respiratory infection in schools: guidance for health protection teams - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/investigation-and-management-of-outbreaks-of-suspected-acute-viral-respiratory-infection-in-schools-guidance-for-health-protection-teams)

## Influenza risk groups

Flu can affect anyone but if you, your staff or children have a long-term health condition, the effects of flu can make it worse even if the condition is well managed and you normally feel well. The free flu vaccine is available for those who are pregnant or have one of the following long-term conditions.

### Conditions which may increase your risk of serious influenza illness\*

- a neurological condition, e.g. multiple sclerosis (MS), cerebral palsy or learning disability
- lowered immunity due to disease or treatment (such as steroid medication or cancer treatment)
- a kidney disease
- morbidly obese (BMI of 40 and above).
- diabetes
- pregnancy
- a chest complaint or breathing difficulties, including bronchitis, emphysema or severe asthma
- a problem with your spleen, e.g. sickle cell disease, or you have had your spleen removed
- a heart problem
- had a stroke or a transient ischaemic attack (TIA)
- liver disease

**This list is not exhaustive.**

Source: \* <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/influenza-the-green-book-chapter-19>

It is important for the setting to maintain an up to date record of all those who fall into the above categories. If you or the parents are unsure if a child's condition falls under one of the risk groups, then advise them to speak with their practice nurse/GP to discuss their concerns and establish if they are in an influenza risk group.

In the event of cases/outbreak, a risk assessment, including consideration of those in the above risk groups, will need to be undertaken as soon as possible. There will be situations where these individuals may be advised to obtain post-exposure medication/immunisation from their GP, but for this to be most effective this needs to occur quickly after their exposure.

SEND settings (Children with special educational needs and disabilities) may have a high number of students who are at risk of developing serious influenza. It is particularly important that SEND schools report possible outbreaks to the local HPT promptly.

**More information on the risk groups can be found in the**

[DH Green\\_Book\\_Chapter7 Immunisation of individuals with underlying medical conditions.pdf](#)

# London education and childcare settings planning checklist for acute respiratory illness (ARI)

Date completed	Completed by	
<b>Actions to prepare for cases of seasonal flu</b>	✓	X
<b>Flu vaccination</b>		
<p>1. Do you have any children and/or staff in clinical risk groups (including those with chronic respiratory, cardiac, kidney, neurological disease, neurodevelopmental disorders (learning disability), diabetes, pregnant, etc).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you do, compile a list and establish if the children/staff are to be vaccinated at their GP or at the setting. This information is essential in facilitating a prompt risk assessment in the event of an outbreak</li> </ul>		
<p>2. Did you know children being offered the vaccine this year are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all 2 and 3 years of age (by their GP or Practice Nurse)</li> <li>• all primary school-aged children</li> <li>• some year 7 to year 11 secondary school-aged children</li> <li>• children over 6 months of age with a health condition that puts them at greater risk from flu.</li> </ul> <p>Most children will be offered the nasal flu spray , in some cases children will be given the flu vaccine as an alternative, suitability will be indicated their healthcare provider, i.e. GP/Hospital Specialist.</p>		
3. Local healthcare teams will be in touch with the setting where a setting-based delivery model has been agreed.		
4. Parental/guardian consent will be required, and the setting may be asked to assist with collection of the consent forms.		
<b>Respiratory hygiene &amp; infection control precautions</b>		
5. Ensure infection control policies are up to date, read and followed by all staff		
6. Immediately send home staff members and/or pupils who become unwell at the setting and remind them not to return until they are symptom free. For COVID-19, isolation period is different – please follow the latest <a href="#">guidance</a>		
7. Check that you have procedures for isolating (with appropriate supervision) a child who falls ill during the day until their parents can collect them. This will include a suitable isolation room with hand washing facilities, PPE available if needed (e.g. for staff providing close personal care to an ill child for more than an hour*) – i.e. disposable gloves, aprons and surgical masks (for flu outbreaks), appropriately trained staff and plans in place for transporting children home who would usually use school bus or public transport. The isolation room should be thoroughly cleaned after use.		



8. Reinforce general education for children and staff about washing hands and respiratory hygiene ('catch it, bin it, kill it' message). Use education materials / resources (see resource page)		
9. Ensure disposable tissues are available and staff and children understand the need for using them (whilst waiting for collection) and how to use them e.g. cover nose and mouth with tissue, use tissue, throw away and wash hands.		
10. Ensure liquid soap and disposable paper hand towels are available at each hand washing facility, this includes toileting areas and classrooms and stock levels adequately maintained in anticipation of increased use		
11. Staff to check, encourage and supervise handwashing in young children, and handwashing / use of alcohol gel (where safe) for visitors when arriving and leaving the premises		
12. If possible and safe to do so, use alcohol gel in places where handwashing facilities are not available (e.g. entrances/exits, and classrooms/settings under supervision), and maintain supplies in view of increased use		
13. Ensure foot operated bins are in use and in working order		
14. Increase regular cleaning of surfaces, equipment and toys using normal detergent, particularly frequently touched surfaces – taps, door handles, stair rails, light switches, computer keyboards etc. Ensure stock rotation of toys to ensure clean toys always available. Cleaning is recommended twice daily as a minimum in an outbreak and as necessary.		
15. Maintain adequate levels of cleaning materials in anticipation of increased cleaning (e.g. disposable cloths, detergent, PPE)		
<b>Reporting to the London Health Protection Teams (HPT) on 0300 303 4050</b> – For all respiratory outbreaks i.e. influenza, respiratory illnesses and COVID-19		
16. Early recognition of an influenza/respiratory illness outbreak amongst staff and/or pupils is vital (i.e. two or more cases linked by time and place/higher than expected numbers than usual).		
17. Suspected or confirmed <b>outbreaks of influenza/respiratory illness should be reported promptly to your HPT if a person is admitted to hospital or there has been a death related to the outbreak.</b> This is to enable them to work with you to risk assess the situation and to establish if any of the particularly at-risk children and staff are considered for post exposure advice		
18. Maintain high standards of record keeping in the event of an outbreak of acute respiratory illness to help investigate the outbreak (i.e. list of staff and pupil cases incl. dates of birth, GP details, symptoms, date of onset of symptoms of the first case, total number of pupils in the school, location of cases) and have to hand the documentation of the flu immunisation uptake levels		
19. The HPT will undertake a risk assessment and provide further advice .		
<b>Actions to take in the event of a flu outbreak</b>		

<p>In the event of an outbreak:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Discourage the sharing of communal toys/equipment.</li> <li>- Encourage the cleaning of hands and objects when passing round shared toys.</li> <li>- Suspend use of communal soft toys due to problems with cleaning them adequately.</li> <li>- Do not allow children to share objects that may become contaminated with saliva and respiratory secretions (e.g. wind instruments).</li> </ul>		
<p>20. Avoid bringing children together in large crowds in enclosed spaces (e.g. whole school assemblies)</p>		
<p>21. Inform the school nurse and local authority as per local protocol</p>		
<p>22. Display flu posters (exclusion poster, hand washing poster)</p>		
<p>23. Send information to parents informing them that there is an outbreak and reinforcing exclusion criteria i.e. do not send children back to the setting until they are symptom free, and basic hygiene advice.</p>		

## London education and childcare settings planning checklist for norovirus

Date completed	Completed by	
<b>Actions to prepare for norovirus (diarrhoea / vomiting)</b>	✓	X
<b>Infection control precautions</b>		
1. Ensure infection control policies are up to date, read and followed by all staff		
2. Check that you have procedures for isolating (with appropriate supervision) a child who falls ill during the day until their parent/guardian can collect them. This will include a suitable isolation room with hand washing facilities, PPE if needed, appropriately trained staff and plans in place for transporting children home who would usually use school bus or public transport. The isolation room should be thoroughly cleaned after use.		
3. Ensure that liquid soap and disposable paper hand towels are available in all toilets and classrooms where there are hand washing facilities		
4. Ensure that Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is available – i.e. disposable gloves, aprons.		
5. Ensure foot operated bins are in use and in working order		
<b>Reporting to the local health protection team</b>		
6. <b>Early recognition of a diarrhoea and/or vomiting (D&amp;V) outbreak amongst staff and/or pupils/student in a school setting is vital</b> (i.e. two or more cases linked by time and place/higher than expected numbers than usual).		
7. <b>Outbreaks of D&amp;V should be reported promptly to the local health protection team</b> for a full risk assessment and further guidance (even if the nursery/school is already aware of local diarrhoea and vomiting outbreak management guidelines).		
8. Maintain high standards of record keeping in the event of an outbreak of diarrhoea and/or vomiting to help investigate the outbreak (i.e. list of staff and pupil cases incl. dates of birth, GP details, symptoms, date of onset of symptoms of the first case, total number of pupils in the setting, location of cases).		
<b>Diarrhoea and/or vomiting outbreak control measures</b>		
9. Immediate control measures to be put into place when an outbreak of D&V is recognised are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exclusion of cases for 48 hours after all symptoms have stopped, this includes staff</li> <li>• Enhanced cleaning of the environment with a hypochlorite solution.</li> <li>• Effective hand washing with liquid soap and water.</li> </ul>		
10. Brief all staff on infection prevention and control measures during the outbreak e.g. during handover sessions throughout the day.		
11. Inform the school nurse and local authority as per local protocol		

<p>12. Maintain high standards of record keeping to investigate the outbreak and help identify the source of the infection by keeping a log (i.e. list of staff and pupil cases including: symptoms and frequency, date of onset of symptoms of the first reported case, location of cases, number of pupils/staff at the setting). These details may be requested if the outbreak is not resolving or diarrhoea with blood in it is reported.</p>		
<p>13. Remove all alcohol gel in use in the event of a D&amp;V outbreak, as this has limited effectiveness against diarrhoeal diseases.</p>		
<p>14. Discourage the sharing of communal toys/equipment. Encourage the cleaning of hands and objects when passing round shared objects/toys. Suspend use of communal soft toys (due to the problems with cleaning them adequately), water, soft dough and sand play. Do not allow children to share objects that may become contaminated.</p>		
<p>15. Increase regular cleaning of surfaces, equipment and toys using normal detergent, particularly frequently touched surfaces – taps, door handles, stair rails, light switches, computer keyboards etc. Ensure stock rotation of toys to ensure clean toys always available. Cleaning is recommended twice daily as a minimum in an outbreak and as necessary.</p>		
<p>16. Advise pupils/students/staff to seek advice from a healthcare provider and have stool (poo) samples taken</p>		
<p>17. Send information to parents informing them that there is an outbreak of diarrhoea and/or vomiting at the setting and reinforce exclusion criteria (48hours after last symptoms) and basic hygiene advice. Your local health protection team can support you in preparing the letter/information.</p>		
<p>18. During an outbreak, restrict visitors to the setting as much as possible and any visitors should be advised of the outbreak and the need for thorough hand washing prior to leaving the setting.</p>		
<p>19. Consider suspending visits to other settings, outings and any organised events such as barbecues, sports days, plays and classroom parties (including whole setting assemblies) until the outbreak is declared over (48 hours of no new cases at the setting which includes both staff and pupils/students).</p>		

## Resources

Health protection in children and young people settings, including education

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-protection-in-schools-and-other-childcare-facilities> (includes posters for managing infectious diseases)

Should I keep my child off school checklist poster

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/626669cb8fa8f523b7221b98/UKHSA-should-I-keep-my\\_child\\_off\\_school\\_guidance-A3-poster.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/626669cb8fa8f523b7221b98/UKHSA-should-I-keep-my_child_off_school_guidance-A3-poster.pdf)

Best Practice: How to hand wash step by step images

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/nipc-manual-appendix-1-handwashing.pdf>

A parent's guide to keeping kids healthy this school year – UK Health Security Agency

<https://ukhsa.blog.gov.uk/2024/09/04/a-parents-guide-to-keeping-kids-healthy-this-school-year/>

### Flu – Key documents

#### Checklist

See checklist on pages 8 and 9 for actions to prepare for seasonal influenza.

Flu vaccination programme briefing for primary schools

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/667570a778b87596da166707/UKHSA\\_12954\\_Flu\\_vaccination\\_\\_\\_Briefing\\_for\\_primary\\_schools\\_2024\\_Single\\_spread\\_04a\\_WEB.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/667570a778b87596da166707/UKHSA_12954_Flu_vaccination___Briefing_for_primary_schools_2024_Single_spread_04a_WEB.pdf)

Briefing for secondary schools 2024 to 2025 - GOV.UK

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adolescent-vaccination-programme-in-secondary-schools/adolescent-vaccination-programme-briefing-for-secondary-schools>

The flu vaccination. Who should have it and why

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66ba2f0fa3c2a28abb50e057/UKHSA\\_13033\\_Flu\\_Vaccination\\_leaflet\\_winter\\_2024\\_04\\_WEB.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66ba2f0fa3c2a28abb50e057/UKHSA_13033_Flu_Vaccination_leaflet_winter_2024_04_WEB.pdf)

Which flu vaccine should children and young people have? (Poster)

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/665f09337b792fff71a86c3/UKHSA\\_12973\\_Children\\_Flu\\_Vaccine\\_A3\\_poster\\_2024-2025\\_03a\\_WEB.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/665f09337b792fff71a86c3/UKHSA_12973_Children_Flu_Vaccine_A3_poster_2024-2025_03a_WEB.pdf)

**Flu: 5 reasons to get your child vaccinated - Primary School (Poster)**

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6672b1d6c087fbe40855ce03/UKHSA\\_12975\\_Flu\\_5\\_reasons\\_poster\\_Primary\\_School\\_2024\\_02a\\_WEB.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6672b1d6c087fbe40855ce03/UKHSA_12975_Flu_5_reasons_poster_Primary_School_2024_02a_WEB.pdf)

**Protect yourself against flu; Information for those in secondary school (Poster)**

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1167454/UKHSA-12388-protect-yourself-against-flu\\_information-for-those-in-secondary-school.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1167454/UKHSA-12388-protect-yourself-against-flu_information-for-those-in-secondary-school.pdf)

**Easy to read poster and leaflet – Information for people with a learning disability**

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1102054/UKHSA\\_12388\\_flu\\_easy\\_read\\_leaflet\\_winter\\_2022.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1102054/UKHSA_12388_flu_easy_read_leaflet_winter_2022.pdf)

**All about flu and how to stop getting it (simple version for children)**

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1111858/UKHSA-12053-flu-simple-text-booklet-children.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1111858/UKHSA-12053-flu-simple-text-booklet-children.pdf)

**All about flu and how to stop getting it (adult easy read version)**

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1182424/UKHSA-12053-flu-simple-text-booklet-adults.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1182424/UKHSA-12053-flu-simple-text-booklet-adults.pdf)

**Immunising preschool children against flu - Information for practitioners working in early years settings, including childminders**

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/651ec2787309a1000db0a8ee/UKHSA\\_12652\\_Flu\\_Early\\_Years\\_A4\\_2023\\_03\\_WEB.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/651ec2787309a1000db0a8ee/UKHSA_12652_Flu_Early_Years_A4_2023_03_WEB.pdf)

Further information and leaflets on flu can be found at:  
[www.gov.uk/government/collections/annual-flu-programme](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/annual-flu-programme)

**Acute Respiratory illnesses including Covid-19**

**Living safely with respiratory infections, including COVID-19 - GOV.UK**

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/living-safely-with-respiratory-infections-including-covid-19>

What are the latest rules around COVID-19 in schools, colleges, nurseries and other education settings?

<https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2023/10/11/what-are-the-latest-rules-around-covid-19-in-schools-colleges-nurseries-and-other-education-settings/>

## **Norovirus**

### **Checklist**

See checklist on pages 11 and 12 for actions to prepare for the winter vomiting bug (norovirus) and what to do in an outbreak.

### **Poster**

Further information is available in this norovirus poster and can be displayed for staff and visitors.

[How to stop norovirus spreading poster](#)

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1149171/stop-norovirus-spreading-poster.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1149171/stop-norovirus-spreading-poster.pdf)

## **Meningitis**

### **Leaflets**

These leaflets describe meningitis and the benefits of vaccination.

Signs and symptoms leaflet and poster

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/meningitis-signs-and-symptoms-poster>

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1183371/UKHSA\\_12744\\_Meningitis\\_\\_\\_Don\\_t\\_ignore\\_the\\_signs\\_A3\\_poster\\_02\\_WEB.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1183371/UKHSA_12744_Meningitis___Don_t_ignore_the_signs_A3_poster_02_WEB.pdf)

Meningitis: Don't ignore the signs

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/744233/Don\\_t\\_ignore\\_the\\_signs\\_of\\_meningitis\\_leaflet.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/744233/Don_t_ignore_the_signs_of_meningitis_leaflet.pdf)

Protect yourself against meningitis and septicaemia – In school years 9 to 10

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/796288/PHE\\_MenACWY\\_leaflet\\_for\\_schools.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/796288/PHE_MenACWY_leaflet_for_schools.pdf)

## England

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/meningitis-and-septicaemia-poster-for-new-university-entrants>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/meningitis-and-septicaemia-leaflet-for-new-university-entrants>

Further information for Higher Education can be found at:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/582511/MenACWY\\_HEI\\_Guidelines.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/582511/MenACWY_HEI_Guidelines.pdf)

Further information on meningitis can be found on the NHS choices website:

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/meningitis/pages/introduction.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/meningitis/pages/introduction.aspx)

## Measles, Mumps and Rubella

### Leaflets

MMR for all: general leaflet which can be downloaded/ordered in English, Romanian, Polish and Somali

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mmr-for-all-general-leaflet>

**MEASLES - Don't let your child catch it - Schools version (Poster 2023-24)**

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/63c68222d3bf7f5805924a2c/English-measles-don\\_t-let-your-child-catch-it-flyer-school-Jan23.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/63c68222d3bf7f5805924a2c/English-measles-don_t-let-your-child-catch-it-flyer-school-Jan23.pdf)

Think measles: It's not just a kids' problem - poster

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1086033/UKHSA-12370-measles-A3-thinkmeasles-poster.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1086033/UKHSA-12370-measles-A3-thinkmeasles-poster.pdf)