



PATIENT SAFETY TOOL BOX TALKS ©

SAFE CARE & SUPPORT

OUTBREAKS AND NOTIFIABLE DISEASES



v1.1

An outbreak may be defined as the occurrence of a number of infections at a greater rate than expected within a specific geographical area and over a defined period of time.

Put simply, two or more people who have contracted the same germs who can be linked to the same place at the same time.

Common causes of Outbreaks in the healthcare setting:

Influenza
Norovirus (“Winter Vomiting Bug”)
Clostridium difficile
Scabies
Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA)
Vancomycin Resistant Enterococci (VRE)



Notifiable Diseases

Some infections must be notified to Public Health. Records of these infections are kept to provide information on outbreaks, unusual clusters of a disease, provide an alert if an infection is getting out of control etc...

What signs should you look for?

Signs and symptoms of an infection in two or more people (service users and staff) that happen in close time proximity where close contact has occurred.

For example:

- high temperature
- increased or worsening cough
- vomiting and /or diarrhoea
- increased wound exudates, foul smelling, purulent discharge
- delayed wound healing
- acute confusion/change in mental status
- unexplained rash



What should you do if you suspect an outbreak?

Any member of staff may suspect an outbreak. If you suspect one, it is essential, no matter what grade or qualification you have, that you report it to the CNM2 immediately. The role of outbreak management is to look after service users/staff who are sick, and also prevent the infection from spreading to others.

Remember that failing to manage an outbreak can result in death or severe illness in vulnerable service users.

Controlling Infections is a team effort



Example of Outbreak Log

An outbreak log must be kept in any area where there is a suspicion that an outbreak may be occurring. This should be readily available for review by Public Health, Environmental Health, Infection Control etc... The log should contain the following information:

- **Patient/staff member name and DOB**
- **Onset of symptoms (date and time)**
- **Symptoms**
- **Specimen/swab sent (where from, date sent)**
- **Treatment given (antimicrobial, isolation, precautions in place)**
- **Diagnosis (include specimen/swab result and date result obtained)**



Group Exercise

How would you deal with the following scenario...

- ◆ *2 service users and 1 staff member have symptoms of vomiting and diarrhoea at 4am in the morning. What will you do?*