

Acute gastroenteritis outbreaks are common in US schools and child care facilities

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Acute gastroenteritis (AGE) outbreaks frequently occur in schools and

child care facilities, and most outbreaks spread via person-to-person transmission, according to a study published online Oct. 24 in *Pediatrics*.

Claire P. Mattison, M.P.H., from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, and colleagues analyzed AGE outbreaks occurring in kindergarten to grade 12 schools and [child care](#) facilities reported from 2009 to 2019, and compared this information to data from 2020.

The researchers identified 2,623 school, 1,972 child care, and 38 school and child care outbreaks from 2009 to 2019. Outbreaks were larger at schools than child care facilities (median, 29 versus 10 cases), while outbreaks were longer at child care facilities than schools (median, 15 versus nine days). The most reported etiologies were norovirus and *Shigella* spp., with norovirus the leading etiology in schools and norovirus and *Shigella* spp. dominant in child care facilities. Overall, 85.7 percent of the outbreaks were spread by person-to-person contact. One hundred twenty-three [outbreaks](#) were reported in 2020; 85 percent were reported in the first quarter.

"Schools and child care centers provide a prime setting for the spread of AGE pathogens, particularly norovirus and *Shigella* spp., through person-to-person contact," the authors write. "Outbreak prevention and control in these settings should focus on handwashing, cleaning and disinfection with effective products, and the exclusion of ill children and staff."

More information: Claire P. Mattison et al, Childcare and School Acute Gastroenteritis Outbreaks: 2009–2020, *Pediatrics* (2022). [DOI: 10.1542/peds.2021-056002](https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2021-056002)

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