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Prevention of Gastroenteritis Outbreaks

Reminder of exclusion or reassignment measures of food handlers, healthcare workers or daycare workers when they present symptoms of gastroenteritis

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Problem:

Across Quebec, MAPAQ data for 2024–2025 report 63 cases involving food handlers presenting symptoms of gastroenteritis, for a total of 273 illness cases. Notably, an incident that occurred in November 2025 alone resulted in 20 secondary cases due to non-compliance with work exclusion guidelines.

Gastroenteritis symptoms are a frequent reason for medical consultation. Work exclusion measures must be tailored to the employment sector, particularly for healthcare workers, daycare staff, and food handlers.

What is expected of clinicians:

Clinicians play a key role in interrupting transmission.

During any consultations for vomiting or diarrhea:

- Verify the patient's type of employment.
- Determine whether the patient occupies a position at risk (food handler, healthcare worker, or daycare worker).
- If applicable, immediately recommend provincial exclusion or reassignment measures (see table below).

These actions can help prevent transmission to a large number of people, including vulnerable populations.

Measures for exclusion or reassignment of personnel

Worker's profile	Exclusion measure
Healthcare workers	**Mandatory exclusion** up to **48 hours** after complete resolution of symptoms.[1]
Daycare workers	**Mandatory exclusion** up to **48 hours** after complete resolution of symptoms.[2] Applicable to all day-care workers involved in preparing and distributing food.
Food handlers	**Mandatory exclusion** up to **48 hours** after complete resolution of symptoms.[3]
Specific pathogens (*MADO*)	May require negative stool cultures before returning to work (according to public health protocols) and a longer exclusion period.[3]

[1] *Institut national de santé publique du Québec* (Comité sur les infections nosocomiales du Québec). *Mesures de prévention et de contrôle des gastroentérites d'allure virale dans les établissements de soins*. .Québec City: *Institut national de santé publique du Québec*, 2017 [online], available at: https://www.inspq.qc.ca/sites/default/files/publications/2311_prevention_controle_gastroenterites_etablissements_soins.pdf (consulted May 5, 2026).
[2] *Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux*. *Guide de prévention et de contrôle des infections dans les services de garde et écoles du Québec, Chapter 5: Travailleurs et stagiaires*. Québec City: Government of Québec [online], https://publications.msss.gouv.qc.ca/msss/fichiers/guide-garderie/chap5-travailleurs-et-stagiaires.pdf (consulted May 5, 2026).
[3] Government of Québec. *Mesures de retrait du personnel malade*. Québec City: Government of Québec, 2025 [online], available at: https://www.quebec.ca/sante/alimentation/salubrite-aliments-prevention-risques/etablissements-alimentaires/hygiene-nettoyage/mesures-retrait-personnel-malade (consulted May 5, 2026).

TRANSLATION