

Norovirus



Information for patients and service users

What causes Norovirus?

- Norovirus is the most common cause of viral gastroenteritis throughout the community.
- Most infections are seen during the winter months, hence the term 'winter vomiting disease'.

What are the symptoms?

- Norovirus is characterised by a sudden onset of diarrhoea and/or vomiting, and generally feeling unwell.
- Additional symptoms may include headache, abdominal pain and in some cases a raised temperature.
- Symptoms usually develop within 12-48 hours after exposure to the virus.
- The illness is usually mild in nature and lasts for about two or three days.

What happens if I get the illness?

- There is no specific treatment, but drinking plenty of fluids is important.
- You may be moved into a single room or to an area with other patients with the same illness.
- Once the illness is over, your treatment will continue as before.
- If you are due to be transferred to another hospital, nursing or residential home, this may need to be delayed. Discharge to your own home may be possible.
- Thorough hand hygiene is also essential.

Can I still have visitors?

Yes, however they should be aware:

- there is a risk of them contracting the illness
- where possible, ward visits from the very young or frail should be avoided
- visitors who are unwell or suffering any of the symptoms **must not** visit until they have been clear of symptoms for at least 48 hours
- visitors should avoid visiting other wards or anywhere within the hospital where food is prepared or served

- hand hygiene must be performed on entering the ward
- **Hand washing with soap and water on leaving the ward is vital in reducing the spread of infection.**

What can be done to help prevent the spread of these viruses?

- Thorough hand washing following toilet use
- Thorough hand washing before handling food
- Observe hand hygiene routines before going into a ward
- Observe hand hygiene routines when leaving a ward
- Anyone suffering with diarrhoea or vomiting should take extra care and avoid handling food or working in any health care facility until they have been clear of symptoms for at least 48 hours.

Why does the ward have Restricted Access?

- In healthcare settings, when the environment becomes contaminated, it is necessary to restrict access to that area until the patients' diarrhoea and/or vomiting have stopped.
- The ward is thoroughly cleaned before it is reopened to new admissions. This is to prevent new patients catching Norovirus and continuing the cycle.

Unfortunately this type of virus spreads very easily in the type of environment provided by hospitals, residential and day care centres etc.

Large numbers of patients and staff can be involved, so it is important to try and stop the illness from spreading.

Your assistance is appreciated.

For more information, please ask to speak to one of the Infection Prevention and Control Nurses.

Help us prevent the spread of infection in hospital.

Please make sure your hands are clean. Wash and dry them thoroughly and/or use the gel provided.

If you have been unwell in the last 48 hours please consider whether your visit is essential.

If you need this leaflet in a language other than English, or would like to receive this information in large print, Braille or audio, please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01934 647216.



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