

Norovirus

What is Norovirus?

Norovirus is a frequent cause of diarrhoea and vomiting in both the community and hospital settings. It is most common in the winter months but can occur at any time of the year. Norovirus usually lasts 2-3 days and the affected person will have diarrhoea or vomiting or both and sometimes stomach cramps. Some people can have a fever (raised temperature), headaches and aching limbs. The illness is usually mild and does not need treatment with antibiotics.

How does Norovirus affect me?

If you become unwell with norovirus whilst in hospital you may be moved into a single room or designated area with other affected patients. The ward may be closed to new admissions as the virus spreads very easily between patients and staff. This is to try and prevent the spread of norovirus around the hospital or to friends and relatives. A stool sample may be sent to the lab for testing.

Any treatment or tests you require will still go ahead but non-urgent tests will be delayed until the ward reopens. Your doctor will advise you on this.

How is norovirus spread?

The virus is easily transmitted from one person to another. It can be spread by contact with an infected person; by consuming contaminated food or water or by contact with contaminated surfaces or objects.

Infection control precautions and hand washing

In hospital, staff will wear gloves and aprons to help prevent the spread of infection and will wash their hands with soap and water when they take these items off. This will also be the case if you need treatment at home, for example by District Nurses. Some patients with infections may need to be nursed in a single or side room. Separate toilet facilities may also be provided.

The most important measure is to ensure that good hand washing practices are followed by yourself; your family and friends; and **all health or social care staff who may look after you**. Your hands should be washed thoroughly using soap and water in the following order after using the toilet and before eating:



WET
SOAP
WASH
RINSE
DRY

Remember to concentrate on palms; backs of hands; fingers; fingernails; thumbs; and wrists.

How can Norovirus be treated?

You should drink plenty of water to stop you becoming dehydrated. You should remain off work or school whilst you have symptoms of norovirus infection, however, once any diarrhoea has stopped for a minimum of 48 hours and your bowel movements return to 'normal' you will no longer be infectious and you will be able to return to work or school.

Can I still have visitors?

Friends and relatives who are unwell with diarrhoea and vomiting themselves should not visit. It is advisable that children under 16 do not visit as they may be particularly prone to picking up the virus. If you have any concerns about someone visiting please speak to your nurse or doctor.

Visitors must wash their hands with soap and water when entering and leaving the ward. All visitors should avoid visiting other wards to help prevent the spread of the virus.

At home and in the community

Good hygiene practice should always continue at home, including hand washing after using the toilet, before preparing food and before eating. Your friends and family should also observe careful hand washing.

Cleaning at home with a detergent product such as washing up liquid, clean cloth, and warm water will suffice. A disinfectant may also be used, but is not necessary. Your laundry can be washed in the usual way.

Useful contacts

If you have any questions, please contact the Community Infection Prevention and Control team on: **01204 390 982** or Hospital Infection Prevention and Control Team on **01204 390408**.

We recognise that not everyone will find this document easy to read. We can arrange for large print, audio tape versions and for summaries or explanations in other languages. Please call 01204 390193 if we can help.