

Norovirus

Information for residents and visitors

What is norovirus?

Norovirus is a highly contagious virus, also called 'winter vomiting bug', and causes vomiting or diarrhoea (or both). Outbreaks are common in the UK in hospitals, care homes and in the community and a large number of people can be affected.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms include nausea, vomiting (often projectile), and watery diarrhoea. Some people have stomach cramps, muscle aches and pains, a fever/high temperature and headaches.

What is the treatment?

There is no available treatment apart from letting it run its course and making sure you drink plenty of fluids. It cannot be treated with antibiotics because antibiotics fight bacteria, not viruses.

How is it spread?

Norovirus is found in the vomit and faeces (poo) of infected people. When people vomit or have diarrhoea the virus can be sprayed into the air and land on surfaces. Norovirus can survive on practically any surface including carpets and soft furnishings. The virus is highly infectious and spreads quickly.

People become infected in the following ways:

- **touching contaminated surfaces (e.g. door handles, toilets, sinks, bedding)**
- **eating food or drinks that are contaminated with norovirus**
- **having close contact with an infected person that has symptoms**

Why is norovirus a problem?

Sometimes people may become very dehydrated due to the amount of fluid they have lost. This can be a problem for the elderly and people with poor health, and some people may require admission to hospital.

How do care homes control norovirus?

- Staff will wear protective clothing (disposable gloves and aprons).
- Visitors will not be expected to wear protective clothing unless helping a resident with personal care.
- Cleaning and disinfection of contaminated areas will be increased.
- If many residents are affected, a restriction on admissions and on visiting may be put in place.
- You will be kept up-to-date of any changes to the visiting policy and can ask a member of staff if you are concerned.

How YOU can help

- **If you think you have norovirus, please do not visit!**
- If you have symptoms and have visited in the last two days, please tell us - you can start visiting again when you have been symptom-free for at least 48 hours.
- The most important way to prevent the spread is with **frequent hand washing**.
- Wash hands with soap and warm water before and after eating, after using the toilet, and before entering and leaving a resident's room.
- Alcohol-based hand rubs (ABHR) may not be effective against norovirus so should only be used after you have washed your hands with liquid soap and water, i.e. between washes.
- Do not share towels or flannels.
- Flush away any vomit or faeces (poo) in the toilet with the lid down, then disinfect the toilet and the surrounding area.
- Wash any clothing or bedding that could have been contaminated. Wash the items separately on as hot a wash as possible for the linen type.
- Do not leave food open and exposed as it could become contaminated and spread infection.