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Communications Department
Tel: 01225 82 5849/5799/6230/1299

communication@ruh.nhs.uk
www.ruh.nhs.uk

Media Release

Help us keep our hospital free from Norovirus

Francesca Thompson, Director of Nursing at the Royal United Hospital, is appealing to local people to help keep the hospital as free as possible from the Norovirus bug.

This highly contagious infection is rife in the community and all surrounding hospitals are affected. The RUH today has restrictions on four wards due to diarrhoea and vomiting, and Francesca says that the support of the local community is vital if more wards are not to be put at risk:

“Currently we have restricted visiting in place for each of these affected wards and we need the public to respect these restrictions in order to help us reduce the spread of infection. However, visitors who are unwell are still coming into the hospital and this is causing us problems.

“We recognise visiting a person in hospital plays a vital part in aiding their treatment, recovery and overall care. To enable this to happen we have a Visitors’ Charter which ensures that visitors are aware of what they can expect of us and what is expected of them, whilst visiting in the hospital.

“We have a strict approach to hygiene to prevent cross infection between patients. Closure of wards to visitors and new patients is an important infection control measure the hospital uses because Norovirus spreads very easily through contact with anyone who already has the bug.

“We ask that relatives contact wards directly before they set out - if they feel their visit is absolutely vital - this will help to prevent the risk of bringing infection into the hospital and avoid unnecessary journeys.”

To view the Patients’ Charter visit the RUH website,
<http://www.ruh.nhs.uk/patients/norovirus/index.asp>

Each ward affected by Norovirus has to go through a countdown process; when all patients on the ward are symptom free for 48 hours, housekeepers can begin the deep clean process. Only when these measures have been taken can the ward re-open to visitors and new patient admissions. This means there are then fewer beds available for new patients, and recovering patients may need to wait longer than necessary to be discharged to a community hospital or nursing home.

Three films, revealing the devastating effects of bringing Norovirus into a hospital are available to view on youtube, which can be accessed via
http://www.ruh.nhs.uk/media/news_homepage/norovirus_youtube_videos.asp

While Norovirus can be a nasty experience, it is normally short-lived and people usually recover quickly. Patients and visitors are reminded not to come into the hospital if they have had symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting in the previous 48 hours, or indeed have been in close contact with anyone with these symptoms.

People who are otherwise fit and healthy will make a full recovery from Norovirus without any medical intervention. If the symptoms persist, or seem to be getting worse, ring your GP surgery. The triage nurse or GP on call can tell you over the phone if you need to be seen, and appropriate arrangements can be made. Alternatively you can contact NHS Direct on 0845 4647.

ENDS