

Date: 13.02.15

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## Media Release

### RUH asks - is your visit absolutely necessary?

The Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust is once again appealing to members of the public and their families to help prevent further spread of infection by avoiding visiting the hospital.

The RUH is experiencing an increase in the number of patients with norovirus, which is a viral infection that causes diarrhoea and vomiting (D&V) and as a precautionary measure, the hospital is asking members of the public not to visit relatives and friends on any ward at the RUH to assist in controlling the spread of D&V.

Increasing numbers of cases in the community have resulted in mainly patients (but some visitors and staff) being affected. The situation has escalated over the last few days and five wards are currently closed to new admissions, although patients on these wards are continuing to receive full treatment.

**Helen Blanchard, Director of Nursing and Midwifery** at the RUH, says: "We are asking families and friends to visit the hospital only if absolutely necessary, for example if a relative is terminally ill or critically ill, or on other compassionate grounds. If a visit is vital, then we ask that relatives contact the ward in advance to confirm that this is appropriate. This is a precautionary measure and good infection control practice to protect patients and to control the spread of illness. I hope that families and friends will understand that we need to protect our vulnerable patients, and that is why we are asking them not to visit for this short period.

"It is important that we see, treat and discharge our patients as soon as possible. When we get an increase in the number of cases of infection and have to close wards to new admissions we have fewer available beds for new patients and we can't discharge recovering patients to community hospitals and nursing homes. This means patients have to stay in hospital longer than they normally would, causing increased pressures through the rest of the hospital."

While visiting restrictions will be lifted as soon as possible, visiting will be suspended at least until Monday when it is next due to be reviewed. Visiting maternity wards is not affected.

In addition, the Trust is asking people with symptoms of diarrhoea and vomiting not to present themselves at the Emergency Department – but to contact their primary care GP or out of hours service for initial advice and direction. If patients are due to come into the hospital for an operation and have symptoms of diarrhoea and vomiting they should phone the ward before they leave home to agree whether they should still have their operation as planned.

The RUH's outpatient clinics are open as usual, so people should turn up for their outpatient appointments unless, of course, they are ill. If that is the case, they need to contact the department to say they are unable to attend.

**Yvonne Pritchard, Senior Infection Control Nurse** says: "I cannot emphasise enough how important it is that people planning to visit patients in the hospital stay away if they are unwell or have been in close contact with someone who is unwell.

"Tempting though it is to visit a loved one, if you have experienced vomiting or diarrhoea then please don't visit the hospital until 48 hours after the symptoms have gone away. The majority of wards at the RUH have personal phones at every bed, these offer relatives the opportunity to offer support to their family member without exposing them to unnecessary risk.

"Along with other local trusts in the Bath and Bristol area, we are totally committed to controlling the spread of infection in our hospital. Staff and essential visitors entering affected wards are asked to take extra care with hand washing and hygiene and minimise unnecessary visits."

**Ends**

### **Notes to Editors**

Symptoms of the D&V bug include fever, abdominal pain, diarrhoea and vomiting and should not last for more than a few days. There is no specific treatment for these symptoms. You should rest, keep warm, take plenty of fluids and if you have pain or are feverish take paracetamol as required.