

Press Release

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RUH asks ‘Is your visit absolutely necessary?’

Although British summer time has officially begun the RUH is experiencing an increase in the number of patients with the seasonal diarrhoea and vomiting bug.

Increasing numbers of cases in the community have resulted in patients, visitors and staff being affected at the RUH and the situation has escalated over the weekend. Six wards are currently closed to new admissions although patients on these wards are continuing to receive full treatment.

The hospital is once again appealing to members of the public and their families to help prevent further spread of infection by avoiding visiting the hospital.

Francesca Thompson, director of nursing at the RUH says: “We have been severely affected by an increase in the number of cases of D&V and we have decided to substantially restrict the number of visitors. 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. If a visit is vital then we ask that relatives contact the ward in advance to confirm that this is appropriate.

“As this is a busy time of year for our hospital 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 and the cancellation of operations.”

In addition the Trust is asking people with symptoms of diarrhoea and vomiting NOT to present themselves at A&E – 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.

As schools are about break up for the Easter holidays the infection control team at the RUH is asking families to think twice about visiting friends and relatives.

The RUH's senior infection control nurse Tracey Halladay 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 two full days 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."

Symptoms of the seasonal 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.

This year the trust has worked successfully to raise awareness amongst staff and visitors of the importance of good hand hygiene to help prevent the spread of infection in the hospital. This includes the installation of state-of-the-art talking posters at entrances to wards which use a verbal prompt to remind people to wash their hands. The hospital has also organised very successful roadshows, exhibitions and themed artwork as part of its 'your hospital in safer hands campaign'.

Ends

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