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**UPDATED**

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### ***Hospital Visitors Warned to Please Stay Away***

People wishing to visit the Royal United Hospital in Bath are being told' "Stay away unless your visit is absolutely essential."

Diarrhoea and vomiting remains prevalent within the wider community, so although the hospital was recently successful in re-opening all wards, the outbreak 'season' is still upon us. As a result 6 wards are closed although it's anticipated that some will re-open in the next day or so. Although there may be only one or two patients on a ward showing symptoms of the virus, it will be closed to try and halt the spread and reduce the risk of the infection spreading. This means no further patients will be admitted to those wards until 72 hours after patients are deemed free of infection.

Currently both staff and patients are affected by the virus which is highly infectious and the advice from the hospital is to please stay away. Francesca Thompson, Director of Nursing at the hospital said: *"Our infection control teams work extremely hard to ensure that a patient's exposure to the risk of infection from those already infected, is minimised. However, because the virus is so prevalent within the community and this is such a large and busy site, it is difficult to stop it being brought into the hospital. That is why we are restricting visiting to the in-patient wards and urging anyone who has, or may recently have had this type of infection, to stay away."*

Tracey Halladay, Senior Infection Control Nurse at the RUH said: *"This pattern of peaks and troughs in outbreaks of the virus is common in the winter months and infection control measures remain in place with staff being extremely vigilant."*

Dr Charles Irish, a Consultant in Communicable Disease with the Health Protection Agency in Bristol said: *"This diarrhoea and vomiting is usually caused by the norovirus and we know that there's been a lot of this virus circulating in the community this year. It's brought into a hospital from the community and it can spread very rapidly."*

*"Although for most people it's a mild infection, it is highly infectious. The symptoms are generally short-lived. People can feel quite poorly whilst they are ill, but there is no specific treatment other than rest and lots of drinks to replace lost fluids. People who are otherwise fit and healthy will make a full recovery without any medical intervention."*

*"It is therefore unnecessary for people with norovirus infection to visit GP surgeries or hospital Accident and Emergency departments. If the symptoms persist, or seem to be getting worse, patients should ask for a telephone consultation with their GP or phone NHS Direct, the 24-hour nurse-led health advice service."*

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Maggie Rae, Joint Director of Public Health for Wiltshire Primary Care Trust and Wiltshire County Council, said: *"These bugs exist in the community all the time. It's absolutely essential that we all take extra steps to ensure we don't contribute to the spread of this virus."*

The RUH outpatients clinics are open as usual so people should attend for their appointments, unless they are experiencing symptoms of the virus. If that is the case, patients are asked to contact the relevant clinic.

**Ends**

**Issued by the Communications Office: Tel: 01225 82 5849**