

17 February 2010

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Media Release

Norovirus - keep bugs at bay by staying away

The RUH in Bath is asking visitors to stay away to help avoid the spread of the norovirus infection, the most common cause of vomiting and diarrhoea at this time of the year.

Norovirus is prevalent in the community and causes 'winter vomiting'. It can be a nasty experience but it is normally short-lived and people usually recover in 3 days. The condition is highly contagious unless great care is taken to contain it, particularly when it gets into environments where people live or work in close proximity, such as hospitals, residential care homes and schools.

Francesca Thompson, Director of Nursing says, "We want to keep our environment as safe as possible for our patients so the advice is to stay away. Please don't visit the RUH, even if you feel perfectly well. As symptoms may not appear for 12 – 48 hours, someone may feel fine but then be taken ill inside the hospital. Norovirus is highly contagious and spreads quickly, particularly to vulnerable and ill people, and so it is particularly important that children do not visit the hospital over the half term.

"We have areas in the hospital currently affected by norovirus so we are asking relatives to contact the ward directly if they feel a visit is absolutely vital."

In hospitals, an outbreak of norovirus can lead to ward closures as measures are taken to contain the infection and stop it spreading. This means there are then fewer beds available for new patients, and recovering patients need to wait longer than necessary to be discharged to a community hospital or nursing home.

Francesca adds "The local community can help us to fight these infections and protect their friends and relatives from a nasty illness by not coming to visit."

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, people should phone NHS Direct, the 24-hour nurse-led health advice service on 0856 46 47.

Bath NHS Healthcare Centre, James Street West, is an 8am to 8pm GP service, open to registered and unregistered patients with or without an appointment, 365 days per year.

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