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Media Statement

RUH alters visiting times to help fight Norovirus.

Visiting hours at the Royal United Hospital are being restricted to evenings only for the foreseeable future.

The change takes effect from Wednesday 24th February. Like many hospitals, the RUH is tackling the winter vomiting bug Norovirus. One of the main sources of the infection are members of the public bringing it into the hospital as there are high levels of Norovirus within the community.

Over the past few weeks the virus, which is highly infectious, has lead to the closure of a number of wards and visiting to closed wards is already prohibited. However, to help reduce the ongoing risk of infection by reducing the number of people visiting the site, afternoon visiting to all wards, other than maternity, paediatrics and ITU, has been suspended for the time being.

Francesca Thompson, the Trust's Director of Nursing says: "Altering our visiting times in this way means we are significantly reducing the number of opportunities to bring Norovirus into the hospital. This reduces our patients' exposure to the virus and also that of our staff. It also means we can increase the cleaning routines on the wards and eventually halt the spread of the infection. We appreciate that families like to visit their loved ones when they are in hospital and are aware of the benefits for patients, but it is currently more important to prevent patients catching this infection. We are asking the public to consider their responsibility to help us to do that."

You should now visit the hospital only if you are collecting someone who is being discharged. If you come outside the designated visiting times or to a ward which is currently closed, you may be refused admission. If you feel that your visit is essential, please ring the ward Sister before you leave home. If you are worried about your own symptoms, please call your GP or NHS Direct. More information about the wards and visiting can be found on the Trust's website, www.ruh.nhs.uk

Notes:

Norovirus 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.

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.

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.

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