

17 January 2012

Visitors urged not to come to RUH if they are themselves ill

People suffering from diarrhoea and vomiting are being urged not to visit friends or relatives at the Royal United Hospital until they are better.

The plea comes as the hospital revealed that last year's Norovirus outbreak resulted in 2,121 lost bed days – days when a bed couldn't be used by patients because restrictions had to be put in place on some wards.

When all patients on a ward affected by Norovirus have been symptom-free for 48 to 72 hours, the deep clean process begins. Only when these measures have been taken can the ward re-open to visitors and new patient admissions. This results in fewer beds being available to new patients, and recovering patients may need to wait longer than necessary to be discharged to a community hospital or nursing home.

Norovirus is highly contagious and spreads easily in seconds through contact with an infected person, object, or surface. It can survive on practically any surface, and lives on hard surfaces for up to 12 hours.

Yvonne Pritchard, Senior Infection Prevention and Control Nurse, says: "We have strict procedures in place for controlling and preventing infections, however Norovirus is a bug that is often brought into the hospital from outside.

"I would urge anyone who is ill, or has been in the last 48 hours, not to come to the RUH to visit.

"We recognise that visiting a person in hospital plays a vital part in aiding their treatment, recovery and overall care. However, if they themselves have been unwell they could be putting others at risk, so notices will be placed at the entrances to affected wards to provide advice on visiting restrictions. If you're unsure whether to visit, please contact the ward in advance."

Posters warning about the impact of Norovirus have been put up around the hospital – including on the back of toilet doors – and the RUH has developed a Visitors' Charter with the aim of ensuring visitors are aware of what they can expect from us, and what is expected of them, when they visit the hospital.

The RUH launched three short films warning people about the devastating effects of bringing Norovirus into the hospital last year.

The films reveal the impact of what happens when Norovirus is brought from the community to a hospital. This is done through the eyes of a mother and child, a student

and a visitor all suffering from Norovirus. The innovative project was the result of collaboration between the primary care trust, NHS Bath and North East Somerset, and the hospital.

While Norovirus can be a nasty experience, it is normally short-lived and people usually recover in three days. People who are otherwise fit and healthy will make a full recovery from Norovirus without any medical intervention.

However, if the symptoms persist, or seem to be getting worse, ring your GP surgery. The triage nurse or GP on call can tell you over the phone if you need to be seen, and appropriate arrangements can be made. Alternatively contact NHS Direct on 0845 4647.

Notes to Editors

To view our Norovirus films go to

http://www.ruh.nhs.uk/media/news_homepage/norovirus_youtube_videos.asp

To view the Patients' Charter visit the RUH website,

www.ruh.nhs.uk/patients/your_appointment/documents/Visitors_Charter_A4.pdf