

Date: 26 February 2015

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Media Release

RUH introduces restricted visiting times to all wards to help fight Norovirus

Visiting hours at the Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust are now being restricted on **all** wards until the hospital is free of Norovirus. The change takes effect from Thursday 26 February.

Like many hospitals, the RUH is tackling Norovirus, a viral infection which causes diarrhoea and vomiting. Restricting the number of people visiting the site will help to reduce the ongoing risk of infection.

Helen Blanchard, Director of Nursing and Midwifery at the RUH, says: "Restricting 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 only visit wards between 3-4pm or 7-8pm, or only visit if you are collecting someone who is being discharged. Visiting is restricted to immediate family members only, no children, and a maximum of two visitors at the bedside at any one time.

If you feel that your visit to a ward is essential, for example if a relative is terminally ill or critically ill, or on other compassionate grounds, then please ring the ward for advice in advance before you leave home. Visiting to maternity, NICU and paediatrics is not affected.

In addition, the Trust is asking people with symptoms of diarrhoea and vomiting not to present themselves at the Emergency Department – 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.

The RUH's outpatient clinics are open as usual, so people should turn up for their outpatient appointments unless, of course, they are ill. If that is the case, they need to contact the department to say they are unable to attend.

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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.

Symptoms of the 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.

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 111.