What can be done to prevent outbreaks of norovirus?

Outbreaks in hospitals are shortened when infection control measures are implemented promptly.

These include:

- Restricting visiting

- Restricting new admissions to wards where there are outbreaks

- Restricting discharge of patients to other care settings

- Institute good hygiene measures:

  Hand washing after contact with infected patients.

  Washing hands with soap and water after using the toilet (visitors are asked not to use ward toilets).

  Isolating ill patients until 48 hours after their symptoms have stopped.

  Prompt disinfection of contaminated areas.

If your visitors are taking soiled clothes home to launder, wash them separately from other washing, in a machine on a 60 degree cycle. Take care when handling soiled clothes as this may cause the virus to be circulated momentarily in the air, allowing it to be swallowed or inhaled and cause infection.

What can your visitors do to help you?

If your ward has restricted visiting due to an outbreak of diarrhoea and vomiting, we ask visitors to visit only if it is essential.

We ask visitors not to visit if they have been in contact with other children or adults with symptoms of diarrhoea or vomiting.

We ask visitors not to bring children onto the ward if restricted visiting is in place. Children may accidentally come in contact with infected patients or their environment, putting them at risk of infection.

For further information please contact Infection Prevention and Control on 01225 825450

The RUH, where you matter

Royal United Hospitals Bath
NHS Foundation Trust
Combe Park, Bath, BA1 3NG
01225 428331 | www.ruh.nhs.uk

If you would like this leaflet in email form, large print, braille or another language, please contact the Patient Support and Complaints team on 01225 825656.

Patient information:

Norovirus

Norovirus: frequently asked questions

What is norovirus?

Norovirus sometimes call the 'winter vomiting bug' is a virus that is the most common cause of diarrhoea and vomiting. It is estimated that between 600,000 and one million people in England and Wales are affected each year.

Causes of norovirus occur in all seasons of the year, not just in the winter.

Norovirus is highly infectious and is easily spread by contact with an infected person or objects and surfaces in their immediate environment, for example: hands; bedding; table or other objects. It only takes 10-100 virus particles to begin an infection.

Noroviruses can survive on practically any surface. On hard surfaces they can survive for up to 12 hours, on contaminated carpet they have been found to survive for 12 days.

What are the symptoms of norovirus?

Symptoms usually begin around 12-48 hours after becoming infected. People infected with norovirus can be contagious from the moment they start to feel ill.

It characteristically starts with a sudden onset of nausea or projectile vomiting and watery diarrhoea. Some people may also have a raised temperature, headaches and aching limbs.

The symptoms may last for 12-60 hours after which the person feels tired or lethargic.

There are no long term affects from norovirus infection. Most people make a full recovery in 48 hours.

There is no specific treatment for norovirus apart from letting the illness run its course. The very young, frail or elderly may become dehydrated so it is important for them to have sufficient fluids.

Will I get norovirus in hospital?

Norovirus is more common in the community. When brought into the hospital by an infected person, patients, staff and other visitors can become infected within a very short space of time.

It may be necessary to close wards and prevent admissions in order to reduce the risk to patients and staff.

We strongly urge visitors not to visit the hospital if they are unwell or have been in contact with anyone with diarrhoea or vomiting (especially other family members).

Good hygiene measures around someone who is infected are needed to prevent the spread of infection.