

You can get further advice and information by:

- Asking your Doctor or Healthcare Professional

Other sources of information about health and health care:

- **Public Health England** works with national and local government, industry and the NHS to protect and improve the nation's health and support healthier choices.
Website: www.gov.uk/phe
- **NHS Choices** is the online 'front door' to the NHS. It is the country's biggest health website and gives all the information you need to make choices about your health.
Website: www.nhs.uk

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Infection Prevention and Control

Norovirus (Winter Vomiting Virus)

Information Leaflet



What are noroviruses?

Noroviruses are a group of viruses that are the most common cause of gastroenteritis (stomach bugs). In the past, noroviruses have also been called 'winter vomiting viruses', 'small round structured viruses' or 'Norwalk-like viruses'.

What are the symptoms?

The most common symptoms include nausea, vomiting and or diarrhoea. Some people may also experience a raised temperature, headaches and aching limbs.

Symptoms begin around 12 to 48 hours after the person becomes infected. The illness is self-limiting and the symptoms usually last for 12 to 60 hours.

Why does norovirus often cause outbreaks?

Norovirus often causes outbreaks because it is easily spread from one person to another and the virus is able to survive in the environment for many days. Because there are many different strains of norovirus, and immunity is short-lived, outbreaks tend to affect more than half of exposed people.

How can these outbreaks be stopped?

The most effective way to respond to an outbreak is to clean hard surfaces with detergent then disinfect with a bleach solution, especially around the toilet, and clean up vomit promptly, to reduce risk of infection. Wash soft furnishings and fabrics following the manufacturer's instructions and institute good hygiene measures including hand-washing with soap and water.

How is norovirus treated?

If you develop diarrhoea, a sample may be sent to the laboratory for testing. There is no specific treatment for norovirus apart from letting the illness run its course. It is important to drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration. Once the norovirus symptoms have subsided for over 48 hours no further action is necessary.

How can I prevent others from becoming infected?

- **Isolation:** Isolate yourself, if possible, until 48 hours after the symptoms have stopped.
- **Hand washing:** It is important that you wash your hands with soap and water after using the toilet, commode, and urinal and before eating, drinking or taking medication. Moist skin wipes are an alternative if you are unable to access a wash basin.

Do NOT rely on alcohol hand gel as this is not effective against noroviruses.
- **Cleaning:** It is best to use detergent and warm water followed by a bleach-based disinfectant on any surfaces and objects that could be contaminated with a norovirus.
- **Laundry:** Wash any clothing, or linens, which could have become contaminated with norovirus in a washing machine at the hottest wash the garment will allow.
- **Visitors:** It is advised to keep visitors to a minimum and they should be informed of the risk of acquiring norovirus. People should avoid visiting others if they are unwell, suffering from or had symptoms of diarrhoea and vomiting themselves in the last 48 hours.
- **Staff:** Affected staff are excluded from work, until they have been free from symptoms for 48 hours.

In addition to the above, whilst in hospital:

- **Isolation:** If you do become unwell in hospital you may be moved to a side room or to an area with other patients with the same illness.
- **Cleaning:** The ward environment will be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected at least daily and medical equipment will be cleaned and disinfected after each use. If you have any concerns regarding cleanliness please inform a member of the nursing staff.
- **Laundry:** Your soiled clothing will be placed in a plastic Patient's Clothing Bag for your family/friends to launder. The instructions on the bag should be followed using a hot wash and separate cycle from other household laundry.
- **Visiting other areas:** To help prevent the spread of norovirus please do not visit other areas of the ward, or other hospitals or departments during this time.