

If I have norovirus, can my family visit me?

As it is easy to catch, visitors should be limited to your immediate family members/partner. Children or very frail elderly relatives would be advised to wait until you feel better; this is usually 48 hours after the last episode of diarrhoea or vomiting.

If your family members have had vomiting and/or diarrhoea they should **NOT** visit until they are better and 48 hours has elapsed since the last episode of diarrhoea and or vomiting.

Reference Sources

- <http://www.hpa.org.uk/Topics/InfectiousDiseases/InfectionsAZ/Norovirus/>

Further information can be obtained from:

- NHS Choices: **Tel: 111**
<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/norovirus/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

Contact details

The Infection Prevention and Control Team

Royal Surrey County Hospital
Egerton Road, Guildford GU2 7XX
Telephone 01483571122 **ext 4580**

PALS and Advocacy contact details

Contact details of independent advocacy services can be provided by our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) who are located on the right hand side as you enter the main reception area. PALS are also your first point of contact for health related issues, questions or concerns surrounding RSCH patient services.

Telephone: 01483 402757
Email: rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net
Opening hours: 9.00am–3.00pm
Monday to Friday

If you would like information documents in large print, on tape or in another language or form please contact PALS.

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Norovirus Diarrhoea & Vomiting



Infection Prevention and Control

What is norovirus?

Noroviruses are a group of viruses that are the most common cause of gastroenteritis (upset tummy/stomach bugs) in England and Wales. Norovirus may also be referred to as 'winter vomiting viruses', 'small round structured viruses', 'Norwalk-like viruses' or gastric flu.

Who is at risk of getting norovirus?

There is no one specific group of people who are at risk of contracting norovirus – it affects people of all ages. The very young and elderly should take extra care if infected, as dehydration is more common in these age groups.

How does norovirus spread?

Norovirus spreads very easily from one person to another by:

- Hands that are not washed after using the toilet
- Touching a surface that has the virus on it
- Food – such as salad or shellfish
- Contact with an infected person

What are the symptoms of norovirus?

The most common symptoms are nausea (feeling sick), vomiting and/or diarrhoea. Symptoms often start with the sudden onset of nausea followed by projectile vomiting (being sick with force) and watery diarrhoea.

However, not all of those infected will experience all of the symptoms. Some people may also have flu like symptoms such as a raised temperature, headaches and aching limbs.

How long will I feel unwell?

Symptoms usually begin around 12 to 48 hours after becoming infected and usually last for one – three days. Most people make a full recovery within 2 - 3 days, however some people (usually the very young or elderly) may become very dehydrated and require hospital treatment.

Why is it a problem in hospitals?

Norovirus can cause outbreaks. An outbreak is when two or more people experience the same symptoms at the same time. Outbreaks of norovirus commonly occur in environments where people have close contact with one another e.g. hospitals, nursing homes, cruise ships and schools.

Norovirus can easily spread from one person to another. The virus is able to survive in the environment for many days. There are many different strains (different types) of norovirus and infection with one strain does not protect against infection with a different strain.

Patients with diarrhoea and vomiting may be cared for in a separate bay or room. Patients with symptoms can be discharged to their own homes but transfer to other wards and care facilities can cause the illness to spread. Transfer to other hospitals will be delayed until at least 48 hours after the last episode of diarrhoea or vomiting.

How can these outbreaks be stopped?

The most effective way to deal with an outbreak is to adhere to good hygiene measures such as:

- Hand-hygiene using soap and water especially before handling food, after contact with infected people, and after using the toilet
- Disinfecting contaminated areas promptly using bleach
- Keep locker tops/tables clear e.g. remove fruit and other foods e.g. biscuits
- Do not allow infected people to prepare food until 48 hours after symptoms have stopped
- Isolating ill people for up to 48 hours after their symptoms have ceased.

How is norovirus treated?

There is no specific treatment for norovirus (antibiotics will be of no benefit) apart from letting the illness run its course. It is important to drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration.

If I'm suffering from norovirus, how can I prevent others from becoming infected?

Good hygiene is important in preventing others from becoming infected – this includes thorough hand washing after using the toilet. Food preparation should also be avoided until 48 hours after the symptoms have subsided.