

# Information for patients and carers

## Norovirus (vomiting bug)



## What is Norovirus?

Norovirus, also known as the winter vomiting bug, (although you can catch it throughout the year, including during the summer months) is a highly contagious virus that causes projectile vomiting and diarrhoea.

There is no particular risk factor related to contracting norovirus, which affects people of all ages.

The virus can survive on surfaces for days and spreads very easily, leading to outbreaks in highly populated places such as hospitals.

Symptom can be unpleasant but usually get better in about 2 days.

## What are the symptoms of Norovirus?

Symptoms of Norovirus include the sudden onset of nausea followed by projectile vomiting, stomach cramps and/or watery diarrhoea.

Patients may get all or some or all symptoms, usually between 12 and 48 hours after becoming infected with the virus.

## How is Norovirus spread?

Virus particles are spread from the faeces and vomit of an infected person. It can be picked up on your hands and transferred to your gut via your mouth, for example, when eating or drinking.

This happens when you have been:

- In contact with an infected person
- In contact with contaminated surfaces
- Have eaten contaminated food

## How to avoid spreading Norovirus

It is vital that hands are washed using soap and water after using the toilet and before eating and drinking. Hand gel does not prevent the spread of the infection.

Stay at home if you have any symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting, avoiding visiting the hospital, if possible, until 48 hours after your symptoms have gone.

Effective hand hygiene using soap and water is the most important action to prevent the spread of Norovirus.

## What if you have Norovirus as a patient whilst in hospital?

Patients may be moved to a single room if they have symptoms or test positive for the virus.

Staff will wear gloves, aprons and a surgical mask to prevent the spread of the virus.

Visiting may be restricted. Information will be displayed on the ward entrance to notify visitors.

If visitors are unwell with diarrhoea and/or vomiting, they should not visit the hospital until they have been clear of symptoms for 48 hours.

## What if you have contact with Norovirus as a patient whilst in hospital?

Patients who have confirmed contact with Norovirus may be nursed in a single room and monitored closely for 72 hours for symptoms of Norovirus.

It may be necessary to close the bay/ward/unit to prevent spread to other areas.

Staff will wear gloves, aprons and a surgical mask to prevent the spread of the virus.

If symptoms start, the patient will be screened by analysing a faeces sample or a rectal swab to determine if they have Norovirus.

## **How can Norovirus be treated?**

There is no specific treatment for Norovirus. Drinking plenty of fluids are needed to prevent dehydration.

Apart from dehydration Norovirus does not generally cause serious illness and there are no long-lasting effects.

## **What is an outbreak of Norovirus and what happens?**

An outbreak will be declared if there are 2 or more patients who have tested positive for Norovirus who are linked in time and place.

The bay/ward may be closed to admissions and transferred to prevent the spread of Norovirus to other areas of the hospital.

Visiting may also be restricted at this time to vital visiting only.

The area will be allocated enhanced cleaning.

Staff will wear gloves, aprons and a surgical mask to prevent the spread of the virus.

## What to do if you have Norovirus at home?

If you are unwell with diarrhoea and/or vomiting at home, you should stay at home and avoid contact with other people where possible and avoid preparing food for others until you have had no symptoms for 48 hours.

## Contact details

Should you require further advice or information please contact Infection Prevention & Control Team - telephone: **01772 523785**.

## Sources of further information

[www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk](http://www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk)

[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

[www.accessable.co.uk](http://www.accessable.co.uk)

[www.patient.co.uk](http://www.patient.co.uk)

[www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/veteran-aware](http://www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/veteran-aware)

<https://bepartofresearch.nihr.ac.uk/>

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/mrsa/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/mrsa/)

[www.nhs.uk/common-health-questions/infections/can-a-hospital-patient-with-mrsa-infection-have-visitors/](http://www.nhs.uk/common-health-questions/infections/can-a-hospital-patient-with-mrsa-infection-have-visitors/)

<http://mrsaactionuk.net/goingintohospital.html>

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[www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets](http://www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets)

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If you want to stop smoking, you can also contact Smokefree Lancashire on Freephone **08081962638**

**Please ask a member of staff if you would like help in understanding this information.**

**This information can be made available in large print, audio, Braille and in other languages.**

Our patient information group review our leaflets regularly, if you feel you would like to feedback on this information or join our reading group please contact on email address:

[patientexperienceandinvolve@LTHTR.nhs.uk](mailto:patientexperienceandinvolve@LTHTR.nhs.uk)

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