



Northumbria Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust

Diarrhoea and Vomiting

Viral gastroenteritis including Norovirus – some of your questions answered

Issued by Infection Control Team

What is Norovirus and what are the symptoms?

Norovirus causes diarrhoea and/or vomiting and is also known as the winter vomiting virus. The symptoms normally come on suddenly and last approximately 24-72 hours. Symptoms may include sudden onset of nausea, followed by severe vomiting, diarrhoea, mild fever, headaches, stomach cramps and aching limbs. You should make a full recovery but may feel more tired for a short time.

How is Norovirus spread?

The virus is easily spread from person to person by contact with an infected person, by consuming contaminated food or water, or by contact with contaminated objects or surfaces.

What should I do if I have symptoms?

1. Usually no treatment is required other than to let the illness run its course.
2. Always wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water after using the toilet, before eating and following cleaning or handling soiled laundry.
3. Please do not visit A&E or your GP surgery. If you need medical attention, please contact your GP by telephone.
4. Stay at home. Drink plenty of water or other non-alcoholic drinks to prevent dehydration. Eat what you can tolerate.
5. Clean up any vomit straight away using disposable cloths or paper towels. Clean the area with warm soapy water to get rid of the vomit and help reduce the number of viruses. Rinse thoroughly with clean water then disinfect with a 0.1% (1000 parts per million) solution of bleach. If you can't use bleach on the surfaces, try to prevent unaffected people, especially children, from using that area.

6. Regularly clean all frequently-touched surfaces with warm soapy water and wipe dry, at least daily.
7. If you usually use a spray cleaner, spray onto a cloth, not the surface to be cleaned.
8. Avoid preparing food for anyone else.
9. Soiled clothing and bed linen should be washed separately on a hot wash, ideally 60 degrees centigrade.
10. Follow the '48 hour rule'. You continue to be infectious for 48 hours after all your symptoms have stopped. You should not return to work, visit hospitals, care homes, schools or nurseries etc until you are 48 hours free from your last symptoms.

What should I do if my child has symptoms of Norovirus?

- Do not send them to school and inform the school of their absence by telephone.
- Keep them away from other children if possible.
- Practice hygiene procedures as described above. Keep your child away from school for 48 hours after all their symptoms have stopped. Your child may appear well, but they will continue to be infectious for this time.

How should I wash my hands?

Alcohol hand-rubs are not effective in killing Norovirus.

Use soap and warm water. Wet your hands before applying soap, rub soap over all surfaces paying particular attention to in-between fingers and thumbs, creating plenty of bubbles. Keep rubbing for 20 seconds, rinse well with running water and dry with a disposable paper towel.

What causes outbreaks in the Community?

As Norovirus is easily spread from one person to another and can survive in the environment for several days, outbreaks are more common in environments where large numbers of people congregate, such as hospitals, care/residential homes, schools, nurseries and even cruise ships.

- Poor hand hygiene.
- Children or adults with symptoms going to school or work, or visiting hospitals or care homes can spread the virus.
- Failure to follow the '48 hour rule' can spread the virus.

What happens in Hospital?

If you have Norovirus whilst in hospital you will notice increased hygiene precautions will be used to prevent the virus spreading further. If you need to do anything further the nursing staff will let you know. The staff whilst caring for you will:

- Wear gloves and aprons.
- Wash their hands before and after each patient contact.
- Perform extra cleaning of the ward and patient equipment to help remove the virus.
- There may be occasions where wards are closed to visiting due to outbreaks of infection. Information regarding closures will be shared as widely as possible at the time, this will include on the Trust website and via social media. If you are unsure, please contact the ward prior to visiting.

Anyone who has symptoms should avoid contact with others until 48 hours symptom free. We strive to keep our wards as safe as possible. We request that visitors perform handwashing upon entrance and exit to the wards and departments, and also when they leave the bed area of their friend / family member.

If you require any further information or need to speak to someone you can contact either the community or hospital infection control teams on 03 44 811 8111.

Alternative Formats

If you would like a copy of this information in large print, another language, audio tape or other format please call the Contact Centre on 03 44 811 8118.

Other sources of information

NHS 111

NHS Choices

www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx

NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)

www.nice.org.uk

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Freephone: 0800 032 0202

Text: 07815 500015

Email: northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk

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General Enquiries 03 44 811 8111

www.northumbria.nhs.uk



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