

Norovirus (page 1 of 2)



If you need your information in another language or medium (audio, large print, etc) please contact Customer Care on 0800 374 208 or send an email to: customer-care@salisbury.nhs.uk

You are entitled to a copy of any letter we write about you. Please ask if you want one when you come to the hospital.

Please complete The Friends & Family Test to tell us about your experience at: www.salisbury.nhs.uk/FriendsFamily or download our App from the Apple App store or Google Play Store.

The evidence used in the preparation of this leaflet is available on request. Please email: patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk if you would like a reference list.

Author: Infection Control
Date written: March 2005
Review date: January 2021
Version: 1.5
Code: PI0010

What is Norovirus?

The term noroviruses refers to a group of viruses (a type of germ much smaller than bacteria) that cause 'stomach flu' or 'stomach upset'. The term Norovirus has been approved as the official name for this group of viruses. Several other names have been used including:

- Norwalk-like viruses (NLVs)
- Small round structured viruses (SRVS)
- Winter vomiting disease.

How do they spread?

Noroviruses are found in the stools (faeces) or vomit of infected people. They are spread when virus particles from an infected person get into the gut of another person. It can happen in several ways:

- The virus spreads in the air from vomit.
- The virus can fall onto any object in the environment and be picked up by another person.
- Eating food or drinking liquids that are contaminated with noroviruses.
- Not washing your hands properly after going to the toilet.
- Having direct contact with another person who has the virus.

How can I prevent Norovirus infection?

Good standards of personal and food hygiene will help to prevent their spread. Unfortunately, they spread very quickly from person to person, especially in places where there are a lot of people together like hospitals and nursing homes, schools, hotels or even cruise ships.

You must always:

Wash your hands really thoroughly with soap and water, especially after using the toilet or changing nappies;

Wash fruit and salads before eating;

Make sure food is well cooked, especially shellfish.

What are the symptoms?

The main symptoms of a Norovirus illness are diarrhoea and vomiting, but some people also suffer from nausea, stomach cramps, headaches,

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chills and fever. The illness often begins suddenly, and the infected person may feel very ill. Although this is an unpleasant illness, it is very rarely dangerous, most people feel ill for a day or two and then make a full and speedy recovery.

When do symptoms appear?

The virus grows in the gut and makes you ill, usually around 24 to 48 hours after catching the virus, but symptoms can appear as early as 12 hours after exposure.

How is an infection handled in hospital?

Patients with symptoms are isolated and precautions are taken with neighbouring patients to reduce the risk of the virus spreading. Staff will wear aprons and gloves when carrying out all direct care and treatment to contain the virus and minimise its spread.

Visitors are asked not to visit if they have experienced symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting in the previous 48 hours.

All visitors are advised to wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water and use the alcohol hand rub gel in addition when entering and leaving a ward.

What if someone at home has a Norovirus infection?

- The infected person should not prepare food.
- Wash soiled linen and clothes separately on the hot cycle of your washing machine.
- Clean surfaces such as toilet seats, flush handle, door handles and taps at least once a day with hot soapy water.
- If you are cleaning up diarrhoea or vomit, wear rubber gloves, wash surfaces with hot soapy water, rinse and allow to dry. Used paper towels must be disposed of carefully and immediately in a plastic bag, tied up and put in the dustbin.
- The infected person should not share towels or flannels with anyone.

All people with diarrhoea should remain off work or school until they have had no symptoms for 48 hours.

What else should I do if I have the infection?

It is important to drink plenty of fluids to reduce the risk of dehydration. We recommend clear fluids like water and diluted fruit juice.

What treatment is available?

Currently, there is no medication that kills Norovirus. Antibiotics cannot cure Norovirus infections.

Further information

Please ask the ward staff if you have any concerns after reading this information sheet. A member of the infection control team will be happy to speak to you or your family.

Further information may be obtained from the Public Health England at www.phe.gov.uk or telephone Local PHE South West 030 0303 8162.

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