

Please do not visit patients if you or other members of your household have had symptoms of this virus within the past 48 hours.

If you or other members of your household have suffered with these symptoms within the past 48 hours, or you are being admitted into hospital, please inform your doctor.

Remember these main points:

- **Norovirus causes diarrhoea and vomiting.**
- **It spreads readily (in many ways similar to the common cold).**
- **It is rarely serious but symptoms can last up to two days.**
- **Handwashing and isolation is the key to the prevention of infection.**

Who can I speak to if I have further questions?

Please speak to any of the ward staff or medical staff who are caring for you. If they are unable to answer your questions or if you require further information, the Infection Control Nurse can offer you additional advice, between the hours of 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday.

To speak to an Infection Control nurse at Heartlands and Solihull hospitals telephone: **0121 424 1137**

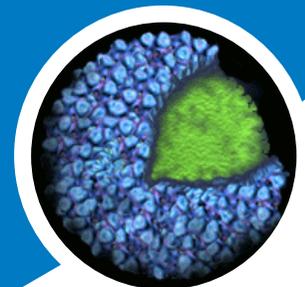
To speak to an Infection Control nurse at Good Hope Hospital telephone: **0121 424 9430**

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Patient Information

Norovirus

Reducing the risk of Norovirus and other infections in hospitals



Norovirus

What is Norovirus?

Norovirus is the most common cause of gut infection in the UK. Gut infections are also known as “tummy bugs”. Norovirus is much more common than other well known gut infections such as Salmonella. It only affects humans and there are up to 1 million cases of it every year. There is usually a peak of the infection in the winter.

What are the symptoms?

The incubation period is usually **24 to 48** hours. This is the time between getting the virus and experiencing the symptoms: The symptoms include:

- feeling sick
- vomiting (often sudden and severe)
- diarrhoea

Although this is an unpleasant disease, it is rarely dangerous. Usually symptoms last for up to two days and most people make a full and speedy recovery. In most cases no treatment is required, but it is sensible to drink plenty of clear fluids (such as water) as soon as the vomiting has stopped to avoid dehydration.

How is it spread?

Norovirus is spread extremely easily from one person to another (rather like the common cold). We cannot see the virus so it is important to understand how we can get it.

Spread can happen through:

- not washing hands after using the toilet
- being exposed to the virus in the vomit of someone who has the virus
- touching surfaces (such as furniture or other people’s hands) that have the virus on them
- the air
- contaminated food

Only a few virus particles are needed to cause illness in a susceptible person. It is easy to see that infection can spread very easily in areas where there are large numbers of people such as schools, nursing homes, hospitals, hotels and cruise ships.

People remain infectious for up to **48** hours after symptoms have finished.



How can we prevent it?

Because the virus spreads so quickly and easily, not all infections can be prevented. However, the following measures will reduce the chance of it spreading.

1. Good hand washing with liquid soap and water is the key to the prevention of Norovirus infection. Hands must be washed before handling food and after visiting the toilet. Anyone with diarrhoea should not prepare or handle the food of others.

Encourage hand washing with soap and water rather than alcohol hand gel or rub

2. Cleaning surfaces - The virus can remain alive for days on floors and surfaces so vomit or diarrhoea should be cleaned up straight away. Staff must clean with chlorine solution immediately.
3. Isolating people with the virus – If a large number of patients are affected, we may need to close the ward. Other serious measures to prevent the infection spreading may include restricting visiting. If you are visiting a ward where there are cases of Norovirus you are at risk of getting the infection.