

## How can I help reduce healthcare associated infections?

Infection prevention & control is important to the well-being of our patients and for that reason we have infection prevention & control procedures in place. Keeping your hands clean is an effective way of preventing the spread of infections. We ask that you, and anyone visiting you, use the hand sanitiser available at the entrance to every ward before coming in to and after leaving the ward. In some situations hands may need to be washed at the sink using soap and water rather than using the hand sanitiser as hand sanitisers are not suitable for use when dealing with patients who have symptoms of diarrhoea.

For infection prevention & control purposes and to keep you safe and well visitors are requested **not** to:

- Visit you if they are unwell or have been unwell in the previous 48 hours.
- Sit on your bed or use the patient toilets.
- Touch your wounds, or any medical devices, drips or catheters.

## How can I find out more?

Contact the Infection Prevention & Control Department on:

Stoke Mandeville Hospital Tel: 01296 315337

Public Health England Tel: 0344 225 3861 (option 4, option 1)

NHS Choices Website: <http://www.nhs.uk/pages/home.aspx>

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

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# Diarrhoea & Vomiting caused by Norovirus

## Information leaflet

If you require a translation or alternative format of this leaflet please call Infection Prevention & Control 01296 315337.

Safe & compassionate care,

every time

## What is Norovirus?

Norovirus (sometimes known as the winter vomiting bug) is the most common stomach bug in the UK causing diarrhoea and vomiting.

## Who is at risk of getting Norovirus?

Norovirus can affect anyone. Staff, patients and visitors can all be affected by Norovirus and this can be very disruptive for the running of a hospital, as well as being very uncomfortable for those who suffer from it.

## How is it spread?

The virus is highly contagious and is transmitted by:

- contact with an infected person
- eating contaminated food
- contact with contaminated surfaces or objects e.g. door handles, light switches.

Outbreaks can occur in places where many people are in close contact with each other, such as nursing homes, hospitals, schools, cruise ships and hotels.

## What are the symptoms?

The symptoms of norovirus are sudden onset of nausea followed by vomiting and watery diarrhoea. They usually begin around 12 to 48 hours after becoming infected and can last for between 12 to 72 hours.. Some people may have a raised temperature, headaches, stomach cramps and aching limbs. Most people make a full recovery within 1-2 days, however some people (usually the very young or elderly) may become dehydrated and require hospital treatment.

## How is a diagnosis made?

Diagnosis is normally made by sending a stool sample to the laboratory for testing.

## Treatment

There is no specific treatment apart from letting the illness run its course. You will need to drink frequently to prevent dehydration. During an outbreak situation it may be necessary to restrict patient movement to prevent further spread of the infection.

If you require urgent investigations (scans, x-ray) you may still be able to attend but the risks will be assessed for each patient. If your investigation is not urgent you will have it after you have been symptom free for 72 hours.

## Care while in Hospital

If you develop diarrhoea or vomiting please let the nurses know straight away. You may be moved to a side room. However if there is an outbreak on a ward due to the rapid spread of this illness, it may be necessary to take care of you on the ward with other affected patients. The staff will take precautions not to spread the virus by wearing gloves, aprons and washing their hands with soap and water. Hand sanitiser is **not** effective when dealing with diarrhoea and vomiting.

Good hand hygiene is **very important** to stop the spread of the virus. You should wash your hands with soap and water **before** you eat anything and **after** you go to the toilet. If you have not received the “Hand Hygiene Benefits Everyone” leaflet please ask your nurse for one. If you have soiled laundry please speak to the nurse.

All fruit and other food should be in a sealed container stored inside your locker.

## Visitors

In outbreak situations it will be necessary to apply restricted visiting or stop visiting altogether, if this is the case a notice will be displayed at the entrance to the ward and visitors will be informed. Visitors should check with the nurses before visiting. They will be asked to wash their hands with soap and water on entering and leaving the ward. If they help with your care they will need to wear gloves and aprons. If your visitors are affected they should not visit the hospital until they are symptom free for 48 hours.

## What should I do if I am unwell after I go home?

If you develop diarrhoea or sickness at home it is important you drink frequently to prevent dehydration.. If your symptoms do not settle or you are feeling particularly unwell you may need to contact NHS Choices on 111 or your GP for further advice. It would be helpful, if you have been in hospital or visiting and develop any diarrhoea or sickness within 2 or 3 days of hospital contact, to let the ward/department know.