

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
- 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:

Wycombe Hospital Tel: 01494 425456

Stoke Mandeville Hospital Tel: 01296 315337

Public Health England Tel: 0344 225 3861

Public Health England Website: <http://www.hpa.org.uk>

www.buckshealthcare.nhs.uk

Follow us on Twitter @buckshealthcare

Diarrhoea & Vomiting caused by Norovirus

Visitor & General Public 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?

Noroviruses are a group of viruses that are the most common cause of gastroenteritis (stomach bugs causing diarrhoea and vomiting).

Who is at risk of getting Norovirus?

Norovirus can affect anyone even if you have had Norovirus in the past. 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 easily spread from one person to another. It can be transmitted by contact with an infected person; by eating contaminated food or by contact with contaminated surfaces or objects e.g. door handle, light switches.

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms will begin around 12 to 48 hours after becoming infected and will last for between 12 to 72 hours. It often starts with the sudden onset of nausea followed by vomiting and/or watery diarrhoea. Some people may have a raised temperature, headaches 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 Norovirus treated?

There is no specific treatment apart from letting the illness run its course. It is important to drink frequently to prevent dehydration.

If symptoms have not improved after 3 days of illness, or if you experience sudden worsening of symptoms or pain contact NHS Choices on 111 or your GP for advice.

Why does Norovirus often cause outbreaks?

It is easily spread from one person to another and the virus is able to survive in the environment for many days.

Outbreaks usually tend to affect people who are in environments such as hospitals, nursing homes, schools and on cruise ships.

If I suffer from Norovirus, how can I prevent others from becoming infected?

The best way of preventing spread to other people is to:

- avoid being in contact with others until your symptoms have stopped for at least 48 hours.
- Do not visit hospital patients, relatives in nursing homes or go to school during this time.

Good hygiene is important in preventing others from becoming infected – this includes:

- thorough hand washing with soap and water
- do not share flannels and towels
- keep surfaces clean and avoid preparing food for others until you recover and are symptom free for 48 hours.

Can I visit friends/relatives in hospital?

If you have symptoms of Norovirus, any tummy bug, or coughs and colds, please DO NOT visit friends or relatives who are patients in hospital. You may well infect them or others and cause an outbreak in the hospital.

Wait until you are well and it has been 48 hours since your symptoms stopped before visiting.

How are outbreaks managed?

Outbreaks can be difficult to control and long-lasting because norovirus is easily transmitted from one person to another. High standards of hand hygiene by washing hands with soap and water are very important and surfaces need to be kept clean.

The most effective way to manage an outbreak is to isolate those infected during their illness and for 48 hours or 72 hours after their symptoms have stopped, depending on the cause. Also the number of people in the area should be kept to a minimum. This is why it is necessary to stop admissions to affected wards in hospitals when there is an outbreak.. Look for information on affected areas when you visit the hospital or on our website.

Please see back page for further information on reducing healthcare associated infections.