

INFECTED

Norovirus

Information for patients and visitors

This leaflet answers some of the questions you may have about norovirus. It explains how it is spread and how you can prevent it. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to speak to the team caring for you.

What is norovirus?

Norovirus is often called winter vomiting disease (although it can strike at any time of year). It is a stomach bug that can pass from one person to another very quickly and easily.

Symptoms of norovirus start suddenly within 1 to 2 days of being infected. These symptoms include severe nausea, vomiting, stomach pains and/or diarrhoea. You may also have a high temperature, headache and aching arms and legs.

Norovirus mostly affects people in the community. Outbreaks have been known to occur in workplaces, schools and in other situations where people are together in a confined space.

It is brought into the hospital environment by an affected individual, it can spread very easily to vulnerable hospital patients and to staff. This can make it difficult to maintain normal hospital services.

How is norovirus spread?

Virus particles can spread from the poo and vomit of an infected patient to the environment.

The virus is spread by:

- close contact with someone with norovirus
- touching surfaces or objects that have the virus on them, then touching your mouth
- eating food that has been prepared or handled by someone with norovirus

How can you help stop the spread of norovirus?

Norovirus is most infectious from the start of symptoms until 48 hours after all symptoms have stopped. You may also be infectious for a short time before and after this. You can get norovirus more than once because the virus is always changing, and your body is unable to build up long-term resistance to it.

Some planned investigations or operations may be delayed until you feel better. This is to avoid spread of infection. Norovirus cannot be treated with antibiotics. This is because antibiotics work to fight bacteria and not viruses.

Hand hygiene is the most important thing we can all do to prevent the spread and protect ourselves from norovirus. It is important to wash your hands with soap and water after using the toilet, before preparing food and if you come into contact with someone who is infected.

You can help by:

- telling a member of staff straight away if you feel unwell, have a fever, feel sick, have vomited or had diarrhoea, and have stomach pains or aching muscles
- making sure you wash your hands with soap and warm water frequently, especially after being sick or going to the toilet – alcohol hand rub does not prevent the spread of infection
- drinking plenty of clear fluids, such as water, squash, tonic water or lemonade and clear soups
- following the guidance from hospital staff
- keeping your room as tidy as possible to allow the cleaning staff to clean effectively

What will the hospital staff do to minimise the spread of norovirus?

Staff are trained in how to manage suspected cases of norovirus and other diseases that can cause sudden, unexpected vomiting and/or diarrhoea. This includes:

- informing our infection prevention and control team
- isolating patients with symptoms in a single room or dedicated bay
- continuing to have good hand hygiene by washing their hands with soap and warm water, and drying them thoroughly
- wearing appropriate personal protective clothing, such as gloves and aprons, for contact with vomit or diarrhoea and then disposing of them immediately afterwards
- collecting specimens of diarrhoea and sending them for testing as soon as possible
- educating patients and visitors about norovirus symptoms and any precautions they need to take
- ensuring increased levels of cleaning, particularly in bathrooms and toilets, where bleach solution is used to guarantee the highest level of cleaning

Special message to visitors

Please do not visit the hospital if you feel unwell or have nausea, vomiting or diarrhoea.

Even if you feel better, you may still be infectious and can pass the disease to other people. For that reason, please do not visit the hospital until at least 48 hours after you last experienced nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhoea.

Who can I contact with queries and concerns?

If you or your carers have any questions about your treatment or any information in this leaflet, please do not hesitate to ask one of the members of the nursing or medical staff on your ward.

You can also contact the Infection Prevention and Control team at our hospital sites:

King's College Hospital, Denmark Hill

Tel: **020 3299 8173**

Email: **kch-tr.KCH-IC-Nurse@nhs.net**

Princess Royal University Hospital, Orpington Hospital, Beckenham Beacon and Queen Mary's Hospital, Sidcup.

Tel: **01689 863459**

Email: **kch-tr.PRUHInfectionPreventionandControlNurses@nhs.net**

MyChart

Our MyChart app and website lets you securely access parts of your health record with us, giving you more control over your care. To sign up or for help, call us on 020 3299 4618 or email kings.mychart@nhs.net. Visit www.kch.nhs.uk/mychart to find out more.

Sharing your information

King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust has partnered with Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust through the King's Health Partners Academic Health Sciences Centre. We are working together to give our patients the best possible care, so you might find we invite you for appointments at Guy's or St Thomas' hospitals. King's College Hospital and Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trusts share an electronic patient record system, which means information about your health record can be accessed safely and securely by health and care staff at both Trusts. For more information visit www.kch.nhs.uk.

Care provided by students

We provide clinical training where our students get practical experience by treating patients. Please tell your doctor or nurse if you do not want students to be involved in your care. Your treatment will not be affected by your decision.

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is a service that offers support, information and assistance to patients, relatives and visitors. They can also provide help and advice if you have a concern or complaint that staff have not been able to resolve for you. They can also pass on praise or thanks to our teams.

Tel: **020 3299 4618**

Email: **kings.pals@nhs.net**

If you would like the information in this leaflet in a different language or format, please contact our Interpreting and Accessible Communication Support on 020 3299 4618 or email kings.access@nhs.net