

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 after reading this you have any concerns or further questions, please discuss this with the doctor or nurse caring for you.

Confirming your identity

Before you have a treatment or procedure, our staff will ask you your **name** and **date of birth** and check your **ID band**. If you don't have an ID band we will also ask you to confirm your address.

If we don't ask these questions, then please ask us to check.

Ensuring your safety is our primary concern.

What is norovirus?

Norovirus is a highly contagious virus that causes individual cases and outbreaks of gastroenteritis.

There is no specific group that is particularly at risk of contracting norovirus, it affects people of all ages.

Because it spreads so easily and can survive for several days on surfaces and objects touched by infected people, it commonly causes outbreaks of gastroenteritis in busy places such as nursing homes, hospitals and schools.

That means it is more likely to affect healthcare workers, patients and hospital visitors. It can cause major disruption in hospitals because of the actions that have to be taken to reduce the spread of the virus and because staff can become ill as well.

How is it spread?

Virus particles can spread from the faeces and vomit of an infected patient. It can be picked up on your hands and transferred to your gut when eating or drinking.

Hand hygiene is the most important thing we can all do to prevent the spread and protect ourselves.

How can I avoid spreading the virus?

- It is really important to wash your hands with soap and water after using the toilet, before preparing food and if you have come into contact with someone who is infected.
- Stay at home if you have any of the symptoms such as diarrhoea and/or vomiting.
- Do not visit anyone in hospital until 48 hours after your symptoms have gone.



- Wash your hands well and often with soap and water, especially after you use the toilet. Alcohol hand gel does not prevent the spread of norovirus.
- At home, try not to share towels with anyone who has norovirus.
- Keep your home as clean as possible – particularly your bathroom and toilet – with a bleach-based household cleaning product.
- Wash any contaminated clothing or bedding separately on as high a temperature as possible, to kill the virus.
- Wash fruit before eating.

What are the symptoms?

The most common symptoms of norovirus are a sudden onset of nausea followed by projectile vomiting and watery diarrhoea. Other symptoms include stomach cramps, muscle aches, headache and fever. You may get some or all of these about 12 to 48 hours after becoming infected. These are usually short-lived and may last up to three days with a quick recovery.

What should I do if I get norovirus?

Although it is unpleasant, it is rarely dangerous. There is no specific treatment or cure and it is best to let the illness run its course. However, if you are very young, elderly or have a weak immune system, you are more at risk of dehydration, so it is particularly important that you drink lots of fluids.

If you think you are dehydrated, your symptoms continue or you become increasingly unwell, please contact NHS 111 or telephone your GP (home doctor) for advice.

To ease your symptoms you can:

- take painkillers such as paracetamol to help ease any headaches, fever, and aching
- drink plenty of fluids so you do not become dehydrated

If you are worried that you are becoming dehydrated, take rehydration drinks (available from your local pharmacy). These provide the correct balance of water, salt and sugar for your body.

How long does the illness last?

You usually get the symptoms about 12 to 48 hours after becoming infected. Most people recover without any problems within one to three days.

Can I visit family and friends in hospital?

In order to limit the spread of infection we ask visitors to confirm:

- they have not had diarrhoea and/or vomiting in the last 48 hours
- they have not been in contact with anyone who has had diarrhoea and/or vomiting in the last 48 hours
- they will wash their hands with soap and water



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 teams at our hospital sites:

King's College Hospital, Denmark Hill

Tel: **020 3299 4259**

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

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

Tel: **01689 863463**

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



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.

PALS at King's College Hospital, Denmark Hill, London SE5 9RS

Tel: **020 3299 3601**

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

PALS at Princess Royal University Hospital, Farnborough Common, Orpington, Kent BR6 8ND

Tel: **01689 863252**

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

If you would like the information in this leaflet in a different language or format, please contact our Communications and Interpreting telephone line on 020 3299 4826 or email kch-tr.accessibility@nhs.net.