Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Norovirus v3

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Norovirus

Patient Visitor and Carer Information

Infection Prevention and Control Department

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This leaflet provides information on Norovirus and how you can help to prevent the spread within the hospital and home environment.

What is Norovirus?

Norovirus is a virus that is a highly contagious (easily spread), also known as ‘the winter vomiting bug’, which causes gastroenteritis (vomiting, diarrhoea, or both), particularly in places like schools, residential homes, and hospitals, due to the close contact between people.

Who is at risk of getting Norovirus?

Norovirus can affect anyone, even if you have had Norovirus in the past; patients, staff and visitors can all be affected by the virus.

How is it spread?

Norovirus spreads from person to person and is transmitted by:

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

What are the symptoms of norovirus?

The symptoms (as below) begin around 12 to 48 hours after becoming infected and last for

between 12 to 72 hours.

- Severe vomiting.
- Watery diarrhoea.
- Or both (vomiting and diarrhoea).

Some people may also have:

- A raised temperature (above 38°C, or 100.4°F).
- Headaches.
- Stomach cramps.
- Aching limbs.

How can it be treated?

There is no specific treatment for Norovirus, other than allowing the illness to run its course. You will need to drink fluids frequently to prevent dehydration (the symptoms of dehydration include being thirsty, dizziness, dark coloured urine, and dry mouth, eyes, and lips). Apart from the risk of dehydration, Norovirus does not serious illness and there are usually no long-lasting effects.

If you are pregnant, there is no risk of Norovirus to your unborn child, but it is important to drink fluids frequently to prevent dehydration.

How do you prevent Norovirus spreading?

The most important way for you and your visitors to prevent the spread of Norovirus is to wash your hands with soap and water regularly, in particular:

- Before eating food
- After going to the toilet.

What precautions are necessary in hospital?

If you are an inpatient in hospital, whilst you have symptoms you may be transferred to a single room or nursed in a bay with other patients with the Norovirus (to reduce the risk of spreading it to other patients). All staff caring for you, and any visitors, must wash their hands upon entering and leaving your room/bay. When caring for you, staff will wear gloves and aprons. Visitors will only need to wear gloves and apron if assisting in your personal care.

Can I still have visitors if I am in hospital?

In Norovirus outbreak situations, it may be necessary to apply visiting restrictions. An information notice will be displayed at the entrance to the ward and your visitors notified.

If your visitors are unwell with diarrhoea or vomiting, they must not visit the hospital until they are symptom-free for 48 hours.

What can I do if I have Norovirus at home?

If you are unwell at home with diarrhoea and vomiting, you should stay at home and avoid contact with other people where possible. Do not prepare food for others until at least 48

hours after your symptoms have settled, as you may still be infectious (even though you no longer have vomiting or diarrhoea).

- Drink plenty of fluids (non-alcoholic).
- Paracetamol may help relieve the fever, aches, and pains.
- Eat foods that are easy to digest.
- Stay at home and avoid visiting hospitals or care homes until you are 48 hours symptom-free.
- Wash your hands regularly with soap and water, particularly after the toilet and before eating food.

If your symptoms do not get better after a couple of days, or you feel much worse, call 111 or contact your GP for further advice.

What precautions do my family and I need to take at home?

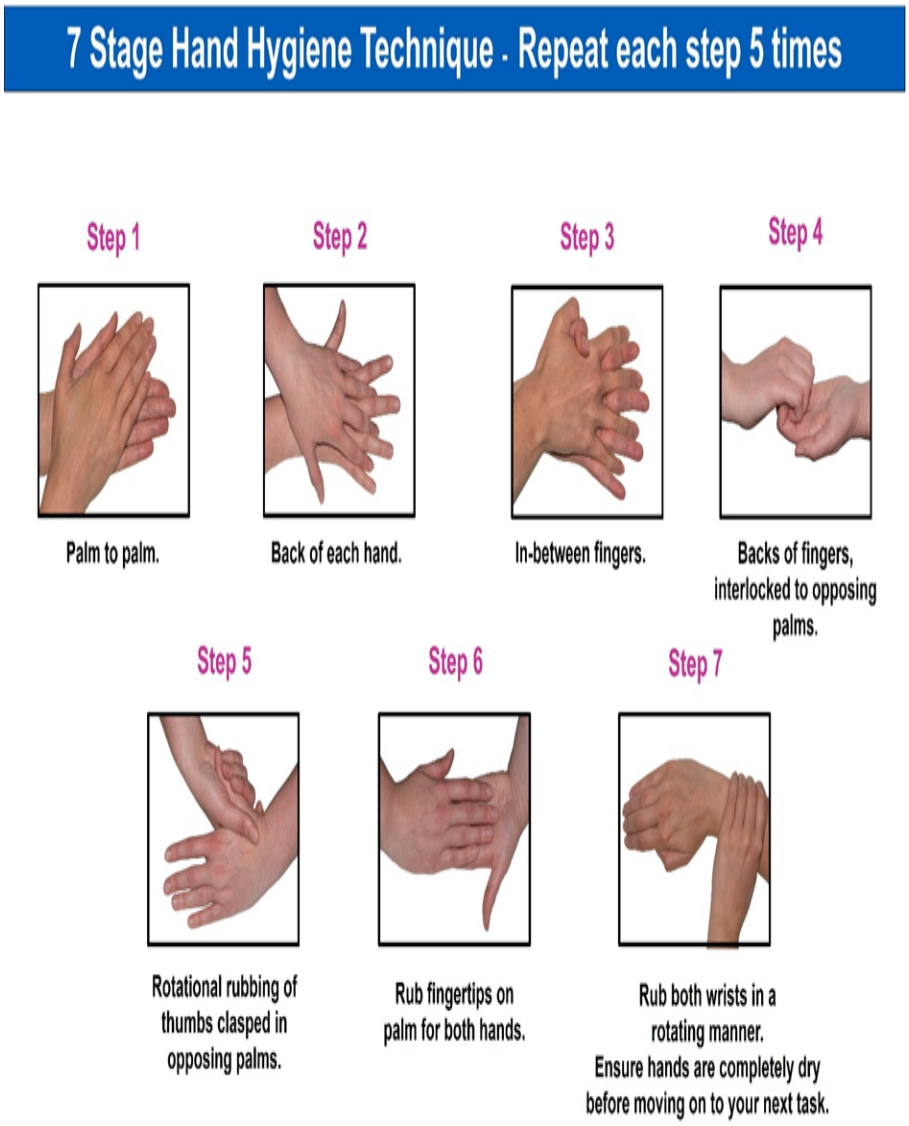
- Wash hands with soap and water, especially before handling food, before eating, after using the toilet, and handling dirty linen or clothing.
- Do not share towels or wash cloths.
- Surfaces in bathrooms, kitchens, and other areas (including door handles, work surfaces and sinks) should be cleaned on a regular basis with a bleach-based household cleaner. Use a detergent-based product on soft furnishings, as they can be damaged with bleach-based products.

- Dirty linen or clothing should be washed separately at the highest temperature recommended on washing care labels.

- Flush away any infected faeces (bowel movements) or vomit in the toilet and disinfect the surrounding area. Flush the toilet with the lid down to stop the virus spreading.

Hand washing

Hand washing should be undertaken using soap and water using the correct method as shown below:



Who can I contact for further information?

If you have any questions or would like further information about Norovirus, please do not hesitate to contact a member of staff whilst in hospital, or your GP once you are discharged home.



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