Viral Infection and Vomiting (Norovirus)

Patient Information

This information leaflet is for patients and has been prepared to give you a greater understanding of the norovirus infection. It may not answer all your questions, so if you do have concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the Infection Control Team.

WHAT CAUSES VIRAL DIARRHOEA AND VOMITING – COMMONLY CALLED ‘WINTER VOMITING’?

‘Winter vomiting’ is a term used for a type of diarrhoea and/or vomiting that spreads like a cold/flu (‘gastric flu’) and is more common in the colder winter months. It is caused by an infection with a virus called Norovirus. Outbreaks are common in the UK, including in hospitals.

HOW WILL I KNOW I HAVE WINTER VOMITING?

People who have a winter vomiting infection have sickness and diarrhoea for about two to three days. They might also have a raised temperature, headaches and aching limbs. Although it can be unpleasant for the person infected, the illness is usually mild and will get better on its own without any antibiotics.

WHY IS WINTER VOMITING A PROBLEM?

Winter vomiting is quite infectious and can spread quite quickly through any close contact, including in hospitals. In hospitals, large numbers of patients, visitors and staff can be affected, which can disturb the normal working of the hospital and cause distress to those infected and their friends and family.

HOW CAN HOSPITALS PREVENT WINTER VOMITING?

When there are high levels of this infection in the community, it is very difficult to prevent patients, staff and visitors bringing the infection into hospital. When we have one or more patients on a ward who have a suspected infection, we are careful to identify it early and take steps to prevent it spreading.
IF I HAVE HAD WINTER VOMITING RECENTLY, CAN I COME INTO HOSPITAL?

We always ask people who have had an infection to ‘leave it at home’ – delaying coming into hospital until they are better. Anyone, including visitors, who is unwell or suffering from diarrhoea and vomiting should not visit the hospital (including the food areas) until they have been free from symptoms for 48 hours.

IF I HAVE WINTER VOMITING, HOW WILL THIS AFFECT MY CARE IN HOSPITAL?

If you become unwell on the ward, we will want to continue to provide good care for you but also try to prevent other patients, visitors and staff from becoming infected.

CAN I STILL HAVE VISITORS?

If you have winter vomiting, you can have visitors but visiting may be restricted. You and your visitors might want to think about delaying their visit until you are feeling better. This is especially important if they are children or frail or elderly. If you have any concerns about visiting, please discuss these.

ARE THERE ANY EXTRA PRECAUTIONS FOR VISITORS TO TAKE?

We want to keep our ward areas hygienic and free from infection. We ask everyone entering the ward areas to wash their hands frequently and use the alcohol hand rub before and after seeing patients. Those visitors who do come to see you should be extra careful not to carry infection in or out of the ward area. If your visitors need to do anything else, your nursing staff will let you and them know.

WHAT TREATMENT WILL I HAVE FOR THE WINTER VOMITING?

If we suspect you have winter vomiting, you won’t need to have antibiotics to treat it – it should get better on its own. If we suspect it might be something else or want to be extra sure, we might test a sample of your stool (faeces) to make sure you don’t have any other problems. The most important thing we can do for you while you have symptoms is to make sure you have plenty of fluids. Once your illness is over, no further action is necessary and your treatment will continue as before.
HOW WILL HOSPITAL STAFF TRY TO PREVENT INFECTION?

Our staff will wear gloves and aprons while they are caring for you and when dealing with your body fluids. Our staff will be careful to wash their hands effectively after contact with infected patients and their surroundings. It is important at all times that ward areas are kept hygienic.

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you want further information please feel free to phone the Infection Control Team on 01895 279767 from 9am-5pm, Monday to Friday.

Information is also available from:

**NHS Direct**
Tel: 0845 4647
Website: [www.nhsdirect.co.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.co.uk)

**Health Protection Agency**
Tel: 020 7759 2700
Website: [www.hpa.org.uk](http://www.hpa.org.uk)
Languages/ Alternative Formats

Please ask if you require this information in other languages, large print or audio format. Please contact: 01895 279973

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Jezeli chcialbys uzyskac te informacje w innym języku lub w duzej czcionce popros pracownika oddzialu o kontakt pod numerem telefonu: 01895 279973

请询问您是否需要在其他语言，大字体或音频格式的信息。请联系：01895 279973