

Norovirus

(Also known as viral gastroenteritis)

Reference Number: ULHT-LFT-3392 v2

Issued: August 2023

Review Date: August 2026



What is Norovirus?

There are a number of causes of viral gastroenteritis of which Norovirus is the most common cause of infectious diarrhoea in England and Wales. It has also been known as Norwalk Virus and Winter Vomiting disease, although it can occur at any time of the year. Symptoms include nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal pain, headache and a temperature.

How is Norovirus passed on between people?

The virus is easily transmitted through contact with infected individuals from one person to another by what is known as the faecal oral route. Norovirus spreads in aerosol droplets that are created when infected children or adults vomit and/or have diarrhoea. It can also be spread by people who do not wash their hands thoroughly who have had contact with infected vomit or diarrhoea.

This virus can be passed on by contaminated food or water, or by touching surfaces that have been contaminated by the virus and then touching your mouth with your hands. Outbreaks are common in semi-enclosed environments such as hospitals, nursing homes, schools and cruise ships and can also occur in restaurants and hotels.

What are Norovirus symptoms?

The virus is usually mild and lasts for 1 to 2 days. Symptoms can include sudden onset vomiting or diarrhoea, projectile vomiting and fever. An infection with norovirus is self-limiting and most people will make a full recovery in 1 to 2 days. It is important to keep hydrated, especially children and the elderly.

How is Norovirus diagnosed?

Healthcare staff will take a sample of faeces (poo) and send it to the microbiology laboratory for testing. The result is usually available in 24 to 48 hours.

How is *Norovirus* managed in hospital?

If you are a patient and you are having diarrhoea and/or vomiting that you feel is unusual for you, or if you are a parent/carer and you or your child has symptoms,

please tell a member of staff as soon as possible. You may be moved into a single room, or if other patients are affected in the same area you will be looked after together in a bay.

Sometimes a whole ward will be closed to new admissions due to the number of patients affected.

Staff will keep a close eye on your symptoms and ensure that episodes of diarrhoea and/or vomiting are documented and ensure you do not become dehydrated, but also to see when your symptoms start to subside.

Hospital staff will:

- Wear disposable aprons and gloves when providing care in the room and manage used bedding from the room or bay as infected
- They will ensure they wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water when they enter and leave the room
- Extra cleaning will be done in either the room or bay. Once all patients' symptoms have finished, then the room or bay will be deep cleaned

What you can do:

You can help to avoid the transmission of any infection by:

- Washing your hands after using the toilet or commode and before you eat
- Keeping your bed space tidy and uncluttered to make cleaning easier for ward staff
- Ensuring uncovered food such as biscuits/fruit/sweets is not kept on lockers.
- If you are concerned a member of staff has not cleaned their hands it is OK to remind them
- Not sharing items with other patients

Visitors

- If you are a visitor and have been unwell with diarrhoea and/or vomiting please do not visit until you have been free from diarrhoea and/or vomiting for at least 48 hours. You could be putting patients and staff at risk.
- Visitors should wash their hands on entering and on leaving a Bay/Ward/Unit and if involved in any personal care for the baby/child or adult

- Visitors should not sit on beds (chairs for visitors are available on every ward) or to use patients' toilets

What the hospital is doing

The prevention of infection is a priority for United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust. To prevent infections, we:

- train all staff how to wash their hands and clean equipment correctly
- ensure staff are “bare below the elbows” and decontaminate their hands before and after each time they touch a patient or the patient's environment
- monitor standards of hygiene in all wards and departments
- encourage visitors to wash their hands before and after visiting wards by providing hand hygiene stations (alcohol gel) are found outside every ward

If you have any questions or concerns, please ask your nurse for advice or ask to speak to a member of the Infection Prevention Team.

Infection Prevention Team

United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust has worked with AccessAble to create detailed Access Guides to facilities, wards and departments at our sites.

www.accessable.co.uk/united-lincolnshire-hospitals-nhs-trust

United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust endeavours to ensure that the information given here is accurate and impartial.

If you require this information in another language, large print, audio (CD or tape) or braille, please email the Patient Information team at patient.information@ulh.nhs.uk