

## What can you do to prevent spreading norovirus?

To prevent spreading norovirus, avoid visiting any facilities if you:

- Have vomiting or diarrhoea. Try to stay away from other people until 48 hours after your symptoms end.
- Have been in contact with someone who had vomiting or diarrhoea: you may develop symptoms or you may have no symptoms but still spread the virus. Try to stay away from other people until 72 hours after your last contact.

If you are unwell and you need to visit any healthcare facilities inform a member of staff before you arrive. Depending on circumstances, the staff will be able to take safety measures when caring for you.

They may ask that you provide a stool sample for testing for the presence of norovirus, or they may ask you to reschedule your visit until you feel better.

## Norovirus treatment

There are currently no medicines or therapies which have been proven to be successful to treat norovirus infection or its symptoms.

If secondary conditions require treatment (for example, patients can become dehydrated), supportive therapies could be offered to these patients.

This leaflet is produced by  
**Healthcare Infection Society (HIS)**

Scan here for full guidance.



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# Norovirus

Find out more about  
controlling norovirus  
in care settings.

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## Why do norovirus outbreaks occur?

Viruses are more difficult to control than bacteria. They are very small particles which are difficult to remove. Unlike bacteria, viruses are not alive and do not need water and other nutrients to 'survive'. This means that they can stay in the environment for a long time. Additionally, it is difficult to detect viruses, so even surfaces which appear to be clean can be contaminated.

Norovirus is a particularly resilient virus. It is difficult to make it inactive with high temperatures or with disinfectants. It also spreads very easily, either directly between people, via food, or via contaminated surfaces and other items. Unlike bacteria, norovirus doesn't seem to be affected by the use of alcohol hand rubs or alternatives.

Norovirus outbreaks can occur anywhere. If an outbreak occurs, this doesn't mean that the facility is not clean.

The outbreaks usually start with a person who either doesn't have any symptoms or does not tell anyone that they are experiencing them. This could be a patient, a staff member or a visitor. The outbreaks in facilities usually occur when there are many people with norovirus in the community or when the outbreaks happen in facilities nearby.

## Immunity to norovirus

There are currently no vaccines to protect you from norovirus. You get some protection after norovirus infection, but this disappears quickly and your immunity may not be effective for different strains. Norovirus illness is mild for many people, but sick and immunocompromised individuals may experience severe symptoms. These patients may not have immunity even after they recover.

## How can you help to control the outbreak in a facility?

Controlling norovirus is everyone's responsibility. Healthcare facilities inform patients and visitors that an outbreak is happening. Follow any advice given by the staff.

You should:

- 1** Wash your hands often, using soap and water whenever possible.
- 2** Avoid sharing personal items (e.g. tablets or pens), especially if you or they suffer from vomiting or diarrhoea.
- 3** Not clean any vomit or diarrhoea yourself – ask staff to do this.

## Control measures

Most institutions will introduce:

- Increased cleaning.
- Restricting access to some facilities.
- Enhanced hand hygiene.
- Asking everyone about symptoms.
- Personal protective equipment ('PPE', e.g. gloves)
- Avoiding transferring patients to other departments or facilities
- Moving patients around so that infected and healthy patients cannot easily meet.

Institutions may also request that visitors:

- Stop visiting, reduce number of visits, or wear PPE\*.
- Wash their hands before entering the facility.
- Not to bring any food or drink or not to use the kitchen facilities.
- Not to take laundry home.

*\*Please note PPE will not completely protect you or other patients from norovirus. Stopping the visits altogether may become necessary. In these situations, the facility may be able to arrange other ways for you to communicate with your family.*