

## Norovirus

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### **What is norovirus?**

Norovirus is a common cause of infectious gastroenteritis (diarrhoea and vomiting) caused by a virus called norovirus.

Norovirus has also been historically known as Norwalk Like Virus (NLV), Small Round Structured Virus (SRSV) and is sometimes known as 'winter vomiting disease' due to its seasonality. The disease is most common during the winter months but infections can occur at any time of the year.

#### **What are the symptoms?**

The most common symptoms are nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea. This may start with the sudden onset of nausea followed by projectile vomiting and watery diarrhoea. Some people may also experience fever and 'flu-like symptoms'. Most people make a full recovery within a couple of days, however some people (usually the very young or elderly) may become dehydrated and require hospital treatment.

Information about what do if you have norovirus is available on the NHS Inform website <http://www.nhsinform.co.uk/Health-Library/Articles/N/norovirus/introduction>.

#### **Who is at risk of getting norovirus?**

Norovirus is very infectious and can infect people of all ages. The very young and elderly should take extra care if they become infected as dehydration is more common in these age groups.

#### **How is norovirus spread?**

Norovirus is highly infectious and easily spread from person to person, by contact with an infected person, it can also be spread through contaminated food or water or by contact with contaminated surfaces or objects. Therefore it is important to wash your hands particularly after contact with someone who is ill, after using the toilet and before preparing food. More information about preventing norovirus is available at <http://www.nhsinform.co.uk/Health-Library/Articles/N/norovirus/prevention>.

### **How many people have been infected with norovirus in Scotland this year?**

HPS publishes information on the number of laboratory confirmed cases of norovirus (<http://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/giz/norovirus.aspx>). As norovirus is an unpleasant, but relatively mild and self-limiting illness most people do not need to see a doctor or have a sample taken for laboratory testing, therefore laboratory confirmed cases represent just a small fraction of the true incidence of norovirus occurring in the community.

A study has estimated that for every case that is laboratory confirmed and reported at a national level that between 239 and 346 (the best single estimate is 288) cases occur in the community see [http://www.foodbase.org.uk/admintools/reportdocuments/711-1-1393\\_IID2\\_FINAL\\_REPORT.pdf](http://www.foodbase.org.uk/admintools/reportdocuments/711-1-1393_IID2_FINAL_REPORT.pdf).

### **Why does norovirus cause outbreaks?**

Norovirus is very easily spread from one person to another. Outbreaks commonly occur in semi-closed communities such as hospitals, care homes, schools, and on cruise ships where people are in close contact with one another for long periods of time.

### **How many hospitals have been affected with norovirus in Scotland?**

HPS publishes weekly information on the number of hospital wards that have been closed with confirmed or presumed norovirus <http://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/haic/ic/noroviruspointprev.aspx>.