

Norovirus

Information for patients and their relatives and carers

Your doctor thinks you or your relative may have norovirus. Here is some information to help you recover quickly and help prevent anyone else getting ill.

What is norovirus?

It is a highly contagious virus, better known as winter vomiting bug, which causes vomiting or diarrhoea (or both). As there is no specific treatment, you have to let it run its course, but it should not last more than a couple of days.

What are the symptoms of norovirus?

- Violent vomiting
- Watery diarrhoea

Some people may also have:

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

Apart from the risk of dehydration, norovirus is not generally dangerous and there are usually no long-lasting effects. (The symptoms of dehydration include being thirsty, dizziness, dark urine, and dry mouth, eyes and lips.)

If you have severe dehydration get medical help again as soon as possible. (The symptoms of severe dehydration include severe thirst, dry, wrinkled skin, sunken eyes and not being able to pass urine.)

What should I do if I have norovirus?

Avoid direct contact with other people and do not prepare food for others until at least 48 hours after your last symptoms have gone.

You may still be infectious, even though you no longer have sickness or diarrhoea (or both).

- Drink plenty of fluids (chemists sell special rehydration drinks for adults).
- Take paracetamol for any fever or aches and pains.
- If you feel like eating, eat foods that are easy to digest.
- Stay at home and avoid visiting hospitals or care homes.
- If your symptoms do not get better after a couple of days or you feel much worse, contact NHS 24 or your GP.

If you are pregnant and get norovirus make sure you drink plenty of fluids. There is no risk to your unborn child.

Tips to help stop norovirus spreading in the home

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, particularly after using the toilet.
- Do not share towels or flannels.
- Disinfect any hard surfaces or objects that an infected person has touched. It is best to use a bleach-based household cleaner. (Use a detergent-based product on soft furnishings as they can be damaged with bleach-based products.)
- Wash any clothing or bedding that could have become contaminated with the virus. Wash the items separately and on as hot a wash as possible to make sure the virus is killed.
- Flush away any infected faeces (bowel movements) or vomit in the toilet and disinfect the surrounding area. Flush the toilet with the lid down.



You can get more information from the NHS Inform website:
<http://www.nhsinform.co.uk/>