

NOROVIRUS: STAFF INFORMATION SHEET

Protect yourself and your patients from infection

Norovirus infection is a common cause of viral gastroenteritis, and causes **abrupt onset of diarrhoea and/or vomiting**. Symptoms usually last 1-2 days and affected individuals may continue to excrete the virus for up to 48 hours after becoming symptom free. **This infection is highly contagious** and following an episode of diarrhoea or vomiting **the environment may become heavily contaminated** with the virus, facilitating spread to staff, patients and visitors. **Scrupulous attention to the highest standards of infection prevention and control practice are required to prevent transmission to yourself and others.**

This guidance must be followed by ALL STAFF:

1. Ensure you are **'bare below the elbows'** when undertaking any clinical contact or when undertaking tasks which require hand hygiene – this will facilitate effective decontamination of hands. Take only the items you need into the clinical area which in some cases may be the patient's home e.g. do not take handbags etc. into bed space areas, where risk of contamination is highest.
2. **Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water followed by alcohol hand gel** before and after each patient contact for clinical tasks and on entry and exit from different clinical settings. This could include ward areas, clinics or patients' homes. If hands are visibly clean and hand wash facilities are not available the use of alcohol gel alone is sufficient in community settings.
3. **Wash hands thoroughly before eating and after using the toilet.**
4. Use **disposable/single patient use equipment** wherever possible.
5. Use **personal protective equipment** (e.g. aprons and gloves) if actual or potential contact with blood, body fluids or cleaning products is suspected. When providing direct care to someone with diarrhoea and/or vomiting who is either symptomatic or not yet 48 hours symptom free, gloves and aprons should be worn.
6. **Do not eat or drink in clinical areas or when undertaking clinical tasks** – No communal boxes of chocolates or biscuits! Food items must be stored appropriately.
7. **Only enter affected areas or visit symptomatic patients if it is necessary.** Where possible, visit clinical areas or patients who are not affected by norovirus or are not symptomatic first. If entering an affected area, where possible visit non-infected patients first before visiting individuals with symptoms or individuals who are not yet 48 hours symptom free.
8. **Do not come to work if you are unwell yourself.** If you develop symptoms at work (e.g. nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea) go off duty immediately, and **notify your line manager. Do not return to work until you have been free of symptoms for 48 hours.** A stool sample should be submitted to microbiology, requesting results be sent to Occupational Health.
9. Ensure you wear a **clean uniform for every shift/period of duty.** Medical and other non-uniformed staff must ensure that **personal protective equipment is used when appropriate** to avoid contamination of clothing which cannot be easily laundered. Clothing should be laundered using a biological detergent on the hottest recommended wash cycle, e.g. 40-60⁰c cycle based on recommendations.

If you have any concerns regarding management of patients with diarrhoea and/or vomiting, wish to discuss the above further or require further advice please contact one of the Infection Prevention and Control Nurses on 01386 502552. Out of hours urgent advice is available from the on-call medical microbiologist via switchboard at Worcestershire Royal Hospital or the Alexandra Hospital, Redditch.