

INFECTION PREVENTION

Viral Gastroenteritis (Including Norovirus) information leaflet



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What is viral gastroenteritis?

Viral gastroenteritis is when the gut lining becomes irritated by a virus, and can have many causes. One of the most common is Norovirus. It results in sudden onset of profuse vomiting with or without diarrhoea.

What are the other symptoms?

Other symptoms can include:

- Temperature
- Feeling sick
- Abdominal pain
- Muscle ache
- Head ache

How do you get it?

Viral gastroenteritis is in general circulation in the population and can affect schools, universities, cruise ships, prisons as well as healthcare premises. In order to catch it, you need to have touched a contaminated surface, had contact with an infected person or eaten or drunk contaminated food or water

How do you stop the spread?

It is very difficult to contain the virus as you may be shedding the virus before becoming symptomatic. In healthcare settings, symptomatic patients are kept in the same area with the same staff caring for them. This often means the affected ward will be closed to new admissions and visitors. This as well as good hand washing and environmental cleaning, help to prevent further symptomatic cases.

Can I have visitors if I am symptomatic?

When areas are affected by viral gastroenteritis visiting is suspended as visitors may become symptomatic or may transmit norovirus to other areas in the hospital. Any visitors that have been exposed to gastroenteritis or are symptomatic should not visit or attend a healthcare facility until they have been 48 hours symptom free.

Visiting will only be allowed on compassionate grounds

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How serious is it?

An infection with norovirus is self-limiting and most people will make a full recovery in 1-2 days. It is important to keep hydrated. Infection can be more severe in the elderly or those with other health problems.

Can it be treated?

There is currently no treatment for the illness other than relieving any symptoms and keeping up a good fluid intake.

What if I have any soiled laundry?

If you are symptomatic with profuse diarrhoea it may be preferable to wear hospital provided nightwear so that they can be sent to the commercial laundry. If personal items become contaminated, the handler should load the washing machine with minimal handling, and thoroughly wash their hands after. Items should be washed at the highest temperature that the material can stand.

Will I get it again?

Like most seasonal infections, norovirus do change in character. There is no guarantee that you will not pick up another viral gastroenteritis infection.

Will it stop me going home?

If you have not had symptoms and you are going to your own home, you may do so but you may develop symptoms.

If you are due to be discharged to another healthcare facility, your discharge may be delayed.

If you require urgent medical treatment, this will still go ahead.

If you have had symptoms, have recovered and are going to your own home, you may do so.

If you have been symptomatic, have recovered and need to go to another healthcare facility, your transfer will not take place until the area you are in has been re-opened.

What can I do to help?

The best thing that you can do is to comply with what the staff ask of you, and to wash your hands with soap and running water, especially before eating and after going to the toilet.

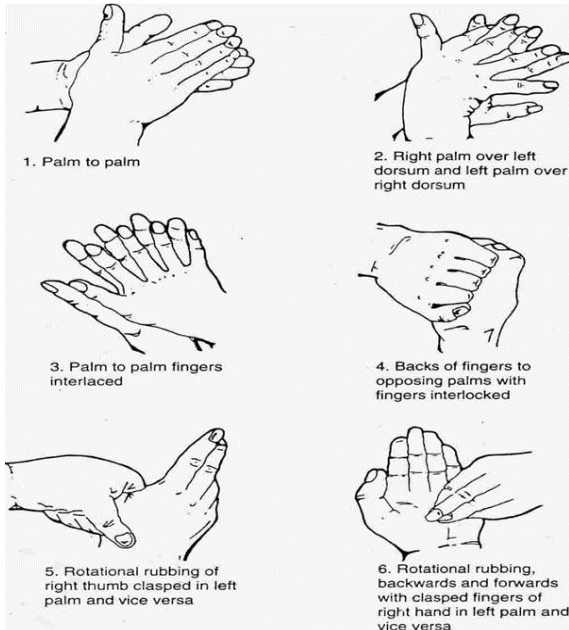
See below the correct hand hygiene technique.

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How to provide feedback

Our aim is to provide a quality of care we would want for ourselves, our families and friends. If there was anything that we could have done please let us know via the department/ward staff or the patient experience team available on 01432 372986 or email PALs@wvt.nhs.uk (opening times may vary).

This leaflet is available in large print, Braille, Audio tape or other languages upon request. Please contact patient experience team on the above telephone number.

You may be asked to give your opinion on the service you have received. We welcome your feedback as this will help us to improve the care and treatment we provide to our patients.

Wye Valley NHS Trust www.wyevalley.nhs.uk

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