

How can I prevent the spread of Norovirus?

Handwashing:

Washing your hands is the most important measure to prevent spread.

- Wash your hands with soap and water (alcohol rubs do not work).
- Wash your hands BEFORE and AFTER any contact with an infected person.
- If you are the ill person, wash your hands with soap and water after every bout of vomiting or diarrhoea.

Soiled materials:

- DO NOT share towels with other family members whilst ill.
- Wash dirty/soiled clothes or bed linen as usual in a normal washing machine with temperature setting at 40 – 60°C.
- Do not load the machine too full in order to allow free movement of the clothes.

Are there any long-term effects from Norovirus infection?

No, there are no long-term effects from norovirus infection.

Can I visit a relative in hospital who has norovirus infection?

- Avoid visiting during this period if you can, until the infection has cleared.
- Respect hospital visiting restrictions which may be imposed for a few days to control the spread of infection to other parts of the hospital and the community.
- Do not visit if you feel unwell and especially if you have diarrhoea or vomiting.
- Do not allow children or frail elderly people to visit patients with norovirus infection.

I must visit as my relative is dependent on me. What should I do?

- Visit if essential, but limit the contact time.
- Use the hand sanitizer provided on entering and leaving the ward.
- Wash hands with soap and water before and after physical contact with infected persons.
- Use the disposable gloves and aprons placed in the ward if requested to do so.
- Do not eat or drink on the ward.

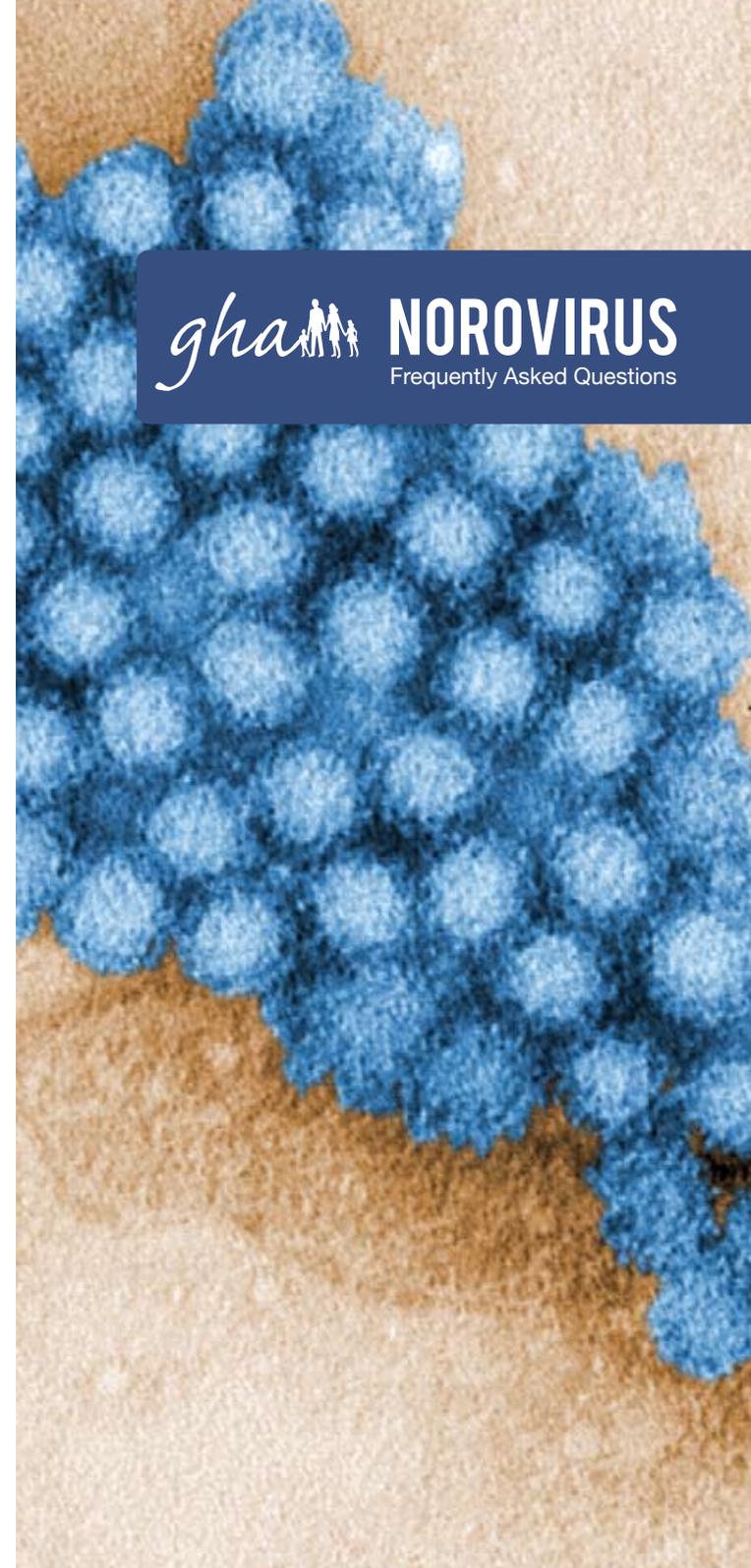
FOR MORE INFORMATION

Gibraltar Health Authority,
St. Bernard's Hospital,
Gibraltar.

Infection Control Officers,
Tel: (350) 200 72266 ext. 2315



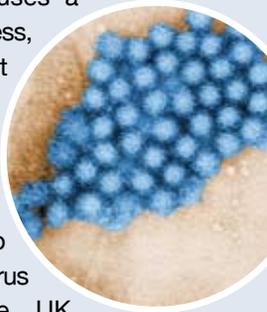
NOROVIRUS
Frequently Asked Questions



Norovirus

What is Norovirus Infection?

Norovirus is a virus that causes a rapidly spreading infectious illness, which is one of the most common causes of diarrhoea and vomiting. It is popularly known as the 'winter vomiting' bug as it tends to peak in the winter months from October to March. It is estimated that norovirus affects around 1% of the UK population each year.



What are the symptoms of Norovirus?

The most common symptoms are nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea. Symptoms often start with the sudden onset of nausea followed by dramatic explosive vomiting and watery diarrhoea. Some people may also have a raised temperature, headaches and aching limbs. However, not all persons will experience all of the symptoms.

Common symptoms:

- Nausea and Vomiting (sometimes very sudden and projectile)
- Diarrhoea
- Stomach cramps

Less common symptoms:

- Fever (high temperature)
- Headache
- Muscle aches
- Tiredness

Most people feel ill within a day of catching it but tend to feel better within a couple of days without any specific treatment.

How is Norovirus Infection spread?

Norovirus is spread to other persons:

- by **Direct contact** with a person who has infected diarrhoea/vomiting; or
- by **Indirect contact** while sharing cups/cutlery or handling food or drink.

Who is at risk of Norovirus Infection?

The Norovirus can affect anyone as it is very infectious.

How does a person get infected with Norovirus Infection?

Norovirus spreads very easily and quickly from person to person because the infectious dose of virus is very small and because the virus is able to survive in the environment for many days. Also, as there are many different strains of norovirus, immunity is short-lived and infection with one strain does not protect against infection with another strain. Because of these features, Norovirus often causes outbreaks of infection affecting many people rapidly, especially in semi-closed environments where there are a lot of people in close contact with one another for long periods, such as in hospitals, nursing homes, schools, cruise ships, etc.. Outbreaks can be difficult to control and depends upon the application of strict hygiene measures.

Is Norovirus Infection treatable?

There are no medicines to treat norovirus. However, healthy people usually get better in 2-3 days without any particular treatment other than bed rest and fluid replacement. Very young children, frail elderly people and those with weakened immune systems can become dehydrated very quickly and may need treatment for fluid loss.

Affected persons should drink plenty of fluids such as water or still lemonade to prevent dehydration. A person who is weakened by dehydration because of persistent watery diarrhoea or continued vomiting may be given 'oral rehydration salts', to help replace lost body fluids and salts. Most people recover fully in this way within 1-3 days and people rarely need to be admitted to hospital. Those that require admission are usually the very young or the very old.



What happens if I am infected with Norovirus Infection?

Stay at home, rest and drink plenty of fluids. You can recognise it either from the symptoms (such as explosive vomiting) or from having other close contacts also falling ill. You do not need to visit the doctor as the illness will resolve within a few days and you may spread the virus to others.

During your illness and for 48 hours after the symptoms have stopped, you should NOT:

- Prepare or handle food.
- Go to work or send children to school.
- Visit relatives or friends in hospital or nursing homes.

Will getting a Norovirus infection prolong my stay in hospital?

Norovirus will not usually delay your discharge home, so long as you are coping, but once you get home you will need to take the same precautions as you did in hospital. You must wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water after using the toilet or vomiting. It is also best to avoid contact with very young or old people whilst you are ill to avoid spreading the infection to them.