



Gastroenteritis / Norovirus Factsheet

Gastroenteritis

Gastroenteritis refers to a condition in which a stomach bug, usually a virus, infects the gut and gives rise to symptoms such as diarrhoea and vomiting.

Norovirus

- Norovirus, also known as the 'winter vomiting bug' is the most common cause of gastroenteritis in England and Wales.
- Norovirus affects people of all ages and spreads easily from person to person.
- The virus is transmitted by direct contact with an infected person, consuming contaminated food or water or by coming into contact with contaminated surfaces or objects.

Symptoms

Sudden onset nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea, usually 1-2 days after becoming infected. Other symptoms may include fever, a headache and body aches.

Stay at Home

Stay off school or work until you have not been sick or had diarrhoea for at least 48 hours.

Recovery

- There is no specific treatment for norovirus and most people will make a full recovery in 2-3 days without needing medical assessment or medication.
- Some people (usually the very young or elderly) may become very dehydrated and require hospital admission. It is therefore important to drink plenty of fluids during the illness to avoid dehydration.
- Those with diarrhoea and vomiting should try and avoid attending A&E or their GP surgery unless advised to do so by a healthcare professional as this can spread the virus to others.

Prevention

- Good hand hygiene is essential to preventing Norovirus from spreading.
- Hands should be washed thoroughly using soap and water (not alcohol gel) after using the toilet, before preparing and eating food and after contact with a sick person. Alcohol gel is not effective against norovirus, but it can be used in addition to soap and water.
- Children should be encouraged to wash their hands after using the toilet, after play, before eating and on arrival and departure from school (to ensure they do not bring the infection to school or take it home).
- For younger children handwashing should take place under supervision to ensure proper technique.
- Any contaminated clothing or bedding should be washed with detergent at 60°C.
- Surfaces and touch points (taps, toilet flush handle, door handles) should be cleaned and disinfected with a bleach-based cleaner.
- Stay off school or work until you have not been sick or had diarrhoea for at least 48 hours.

Further Information:

[Diarrhoea and vomiting - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

[How to stop norovirus spreading - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)