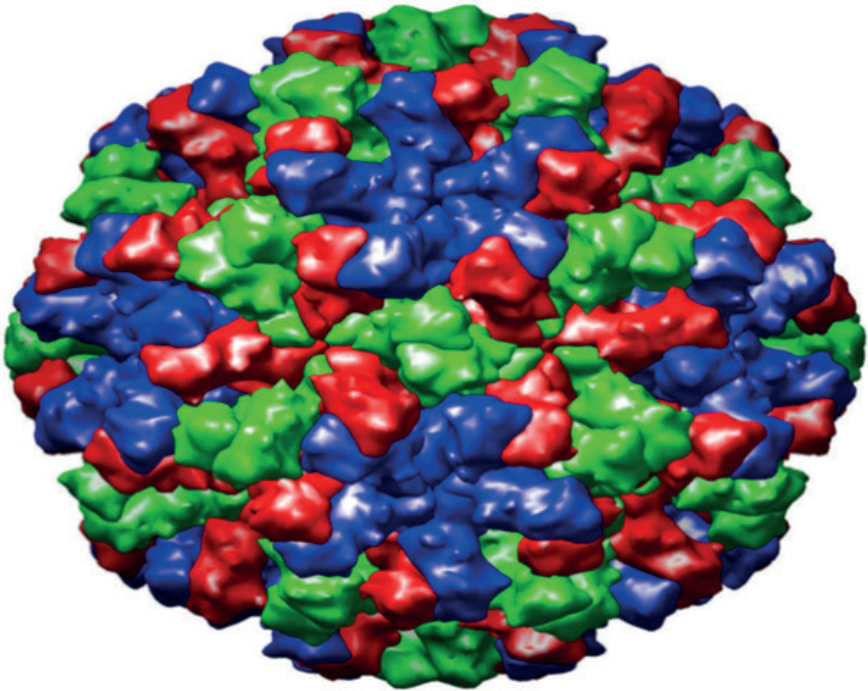


St Margaret's
Hospice Care

Norovirus

Information for patients and visitors



Introduction

This leaflet is intended for patients and visitors, to give them a greater understanding of norovirus, also known as the winter vomiting bug.

What is norovirus?

Norovirus is the most common cause of infectious diarrhoea in the UK, affecting people of all ages. It is sometimes called 'winter vomiting disease' or small round structured virus (SRSV). The virus, which is highly contagious, causes vomiting and diarrhoea.

There are no long term effects from norovirus but you may still excrete the virus for two weeks after the illness, so transmission is difficult to control.

Unfortunately, immunity is short-lived. This means that even if a person has had norovirus they may still get re-infected.

Causes

Norovirus is not a hospital acquired infection: the infection affects the wider community and outbreaks of norovirus occur in semi-closed institutions such as healthcare environments, schools and cruise ships.

The outbreaks occur because large numbers of people are in close contact with each other which provides an ideal environment for the spread of norovirus.

Symptoms

The incubation period is 24-72 hours (This is the time between catching the virus and developing symptoms). Symptoms include nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal pain, headache and a temperature. Symptoms can last between 12-60 hours. Generally people recover after 24-48 hours. Norovirus is usually mild in nature but nevertheless something to be avoided if at all possible.

Diagnosis

Diagnosis is made by sending a sample of diarrhoea or vomit to the microbiology laboratory.

How can it be treated?

There is no precise treatment; the illness needs to run its course. However, there is a risk of dehydration, so it is really important to drink plenty of fluids. If it is hard to keep fluids down, try to take small sips of fluid frequently or suck ice cubes to keep hydrated.

Paracetamol can be taken for any fever, aches or pains.

How do we prevent the spread?

Norovirus particles spread in aerosol droplets that are created from infected diarrhoea faeces and vomit of an infected individual.

The most important way to prevent the spread of infection is to wash hands with antimicrobial foam wash and warm running water and remember to dry them thoroughly.

Hand washing must be undertaken before eating food, after going to the toilet or touching any contaminated surfaces. Do not be afraid to ask staff to help you clean your hands if you cannot clean them yourself.

Patients with norovirus will be isolated from non-infected patients normally in a single room or in a dedicated bay if there are a few cases of the infection. Staff will wear disposable gloves and apron.

If there are two or more cases of norovirus the outbreak policy will be activated, the ward will be closed to new admissions and visitors will be restricted.

Enhanced cleaning will be undertaken by the Housekeepers in order to eradicate the norovirus from the ward. Vomit and diarrhoea must be cleaned up immediately to prevent the spread.

Personal laundry

We do not routinely wash personal laundry. If laundry is sent home it will be placed in a patient alginate clothing bag to prevent cross infection.

The alginate bag can be put directly into the washing machine. Clothes should be washed separately on the highest temperature recommended by the clothing manufacturer using usual washing detergent. Ideally tumble dry afterwards.

cont.

Are visitors at risk?

If the ward is closed there may be some visiting restrictions. Please check with the nursing team.

Visitors who are symptomatic with vomiting or diarrhoea must not visit until they are 48 hours clear after the last symptom.

Visitors will be encouraged not to socialise with other patients. It is advisable that children under the age of 12 do not visit.

It's important that all visitors use the antimicrobial foam rub at reception and wash their hands with antimicrobial foam wash and dry them thoroughly with the disposable paper towels provided when leaving the In-patient Unit.

Please do not allow visitors to sit or lie on the bed or use the en-suite facilities.

St Margaret's Hospice Care Taunton Hospice,

Heron Drive, Bishops Hull, Taunton, TA1 5HA

 01823 333822

St Margaret's Hospice Care Yeovil Hospice,

Little Tarrat Lane, Yeovil, BA20 2HU

 01935 709480

 CRC@st-margarets-hospice.org.uk

St Margaret's Hospice Care is committed to taking your privacy seriously and protecting your personal information. If you want to know more about how we use your data go on the 'privacy statement' on our website or ask for a copy of this information via info@st-margarets-hospice.org.uk

Please note all incoming and outgoing calls may be recorded for training and quality purposes.

Publication date: Jan 2017 IC|017|01 Registered Charity No: 279473



St Margaret's
Hospice Care