

Guidance at a Glance – Norovirus

These guidelines support the delivery of care in community and social care settings. This guidance reflects best practice/national guidelines.

Norovirus is a virus and the most common cause of viral gastroenteritis (stomach bug) in the UK. Many people refer to it as gastric flu or winter vomiting. It is important to use infection prevention and control precautions as viral gastroenteritis is highly infectious and can spread easily from person to person.

Viral gastroenteritis is easily spread from person to person and, without effective cleaning, the virus is able to survive in the environment for many days.

Outbreaks tend to affect people in hospitals, care homes, or where there are a large group of people. An outbreak is defined as two or more people within the same clinical area who have similar symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting within a 48-hour time period.

SYMPTOMS

- Diarrhoea
- Vomiting,
- Feeling of sickness,
- Abdominal/stomach cramps,
- Headache, and/or
- Low grade fever.

Symptoms usually begin around 12-48 hours after being infected with the virus. Illness is usually of a short duration and most people are better within 48 hours with no long-term effects. However, some people, especially the elderly and those with existing long-term illnesses, may have symptoms that last longer.

TRANSMISSION

The virus is presented in an infected person's vomit and faeces (stool). A person is infected after swallowing the virus which usually happens by a hand to mouth action e.g. when eating.

Viral gastroenteritis is spread by:

- Contaminated hands
- Contaminated surfaces and equipment.
- Contaminated food



OUTBREAK MANAGEMENT

- Isolate person affected.
- If in outbreak the home needs to be closed until symptom free for 3 days following onset of last case
- Implement IPC precautions
- Hand washing with soap and water – **Hand gel not effective**
- PPE
- Inform:
 - Public Health Team at LCC in hours (01522 553729)
 - Public Health England out of hours (03442254524)
 - GP
- Encourage people to remain in room and rest.
- Maintain daily monitoring of people affected.
- Obtain samples where possible
- Allocate staff to work in areas to care for affected vs. non affected residents
- Staff that are affected to remain at home until 48 hours symptom free.

- Lincolnshire County Council (2018) Outbreak management: An Information resource for care homes.
- NHS (2018) Norovirus (vomiting bug). Available from <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/norovirus/>