



## Factsheet: Norovirus

### What is Norovirus?

Norovirus is a non-bacterial gastroenteritis (stomach bug) which is commonly known as the “*winter vomiting virus*” as it is frequently present during the winter months. It has relatively mild symptoms, but is highly infectious.

### How is infection spread?

The main spread of infection is through contact with contaminated objects, surfaces, and infected people. For example:

- Ineffective hand washing after using the toilet
- Contaminated food and water
- Touching contaminated surfaces such as door handles, telephones etc.
- Insufficient cleaning of toilet seats and changing mats

Infection may also be spread through airborne particles caused by vomiting.

### What are the signs and symptoms?

The incubation period is between 12 and 72 hours. Common symptoms include:

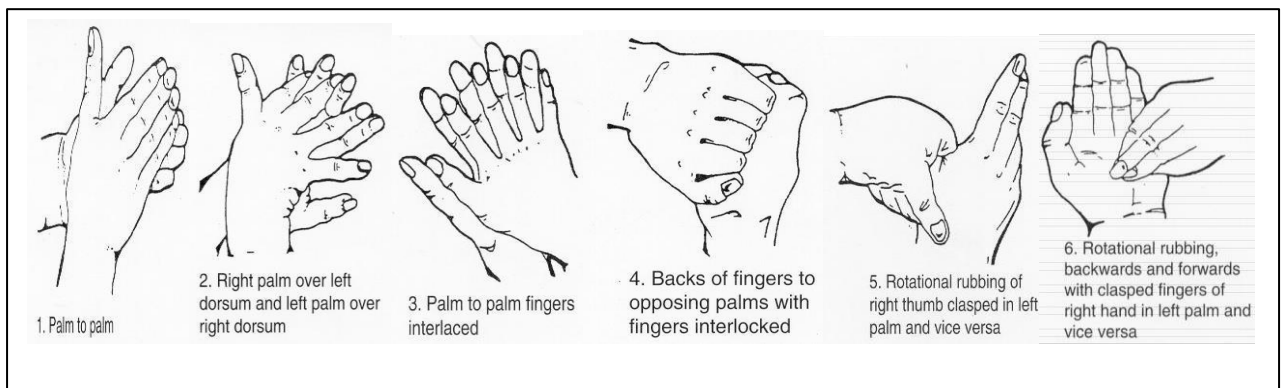
- Diarrhoea
- Vomiting
- Nausea
- Abdominal Pain
- Muscle Ache
- Headaches
- Fever

These symptoms usually last between 12-60 hours. Most people make a full recovery within 1-2 days, however some people (particularly the very young or elderly) may become very dehydrated and require hospital treatment.

### How to prevent spread of infection?

The infection can be reduced if the following steps are adopted:

- Good hand washing procedures are essential (illustrated in the picture below)
- Thorough and frequent disinfection of surfaces, such as kitchen worktops, toilet seats, toys, and door handles, etc.
- Good personal hygiene.
- Avoid eating any raw or unwashed foodstuffs.



### How common is Norovirus

Norovirus is not a notifiable disease so reporting is done on a voluntary basis. UK Health Security Agency only receives reports of outbreaks and we see between 130 and 250 outbreaks each year. It is estimated that Norovirus affects between 600,000 and two million people in the UK each year

The virus can easily spread where there are large numbers of people present, or in semi-enclosed environments, examples being schools, residential homes and hospitals.

### What to do if infection occurs

Remain at home and reduce your contact with others as much as is possible.

People who have had the infection must stay away from work or school/nursery while they have symptoms, **AND** for a further 48 hours after the last symptoms.

Food preparation should also be avoided until 48 hours after the symptoms have subsided.

### Treatments

- There is no specific treatment available; however, the illness will usually run its course in 1-2 days.
- Drinking plenty of water helps to avoid diarrhoea related dehydration.
- It may be necessary to provide your doctor with a stool sample for analysis.

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