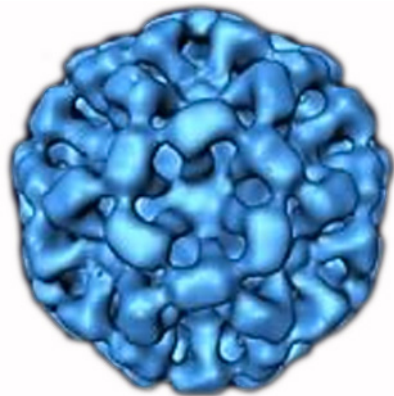


Viral gastroenteritis

Information for patients



What is Viral Gastroenteritis

Viral gastroenteritis is an illness which can be caused by any one of several different viruses which affect the gut. Symptoms often include a feeling of wanting to be sick, headache, stomach ache, high fever, vomiting and diarrhoea.

Symptoms usually last between 24 and 48 hours, but those affected may still be able to pass the infection on to others up to 48 hours after their symptoms have stopped.

How will I know if I've got Viral Gastroenteritis?

If you start to develop any of the following symptoms such as headache, stomach ache, feeling sick, vomiting or diarrhoea, please inform a member of staff. If you have diarrhoea and we are not sure what is causing it, a sample will be sent to the laboratory to test for the viruses which cause gastroenteritis. Either a doctor or one of the nursing team will let you know your result as soon as possible.

How did I get Viral Gastroenteritis?

Viral gastroenteritis can spread quickly in hospitals and other care settings. People catch viral gastroenteritis by coming into contact with somebody who is already affected or by poor hand washing. Please tell nursing staff if you have come into contact with anybody in the last three days with symptoms of diarrhoea and vomiting or if you have recently left another hospital or care setting which had affected wards.

What will happen to me?

You may be asked to move to a single room until you are free of symptoms for 48 hours. This is to stop the infection

spreading to other patients. If other people on the ward are also ill you may be nursed together in the same area. In some cases the ward may have to be restricted. This means that new patients are not admitted to the ward and patients can not be discharged to other health care settings. The ward will usually become unrestricted when all patients have been free of symptoms for 48 hours.

What about treatment?

Currently there are no treatments available to kill the viruses that cause viral gastroenteritis. Diarrhoea and vomiting can sometimes cause dehydration, so it is important that you continue to drink plenty of fluids to stop this happening. If your ward is restricted you will still receive all the treatment you need. However some non-urgent investigations may be postponed until the outbreak is over.

Will it affect my visitors?

The elderly and very young may be more at risk of catching viral gastroenteritis if they visit during this time.

Visitors who have symptoms, (for example nausea, diarrhoea and/or vomiting) should not visit until 48 hours after their symptoms have stopped. If your relatives are visiting someone else apart from you it is better that they see you last. It is also advised that your visitors remain with you while on the ward, as mixing with other patients can pass on this infection very easily. Friends and relatives are also advised not to eat or drink whilst visiting. They will also be asked to wash their hands with soap and water on entering and leaving the ward. There are posters telling them how to use it.

How can I help stop Viral Gastroenteritis spreading?

Hand hygiene is very important in helping prevent the spread of infection. Remember to wash your hands after using the toilet, before eating, and after handling any dirty items of clothing or laundry.

If you are unable to get to a sink, single use wipes can be used. Please ask a member of staff if you need any help. If you have a bath or shower this should be cleaned properly after use, please tell a member of staff when you have finished. It is also important that you only use the toilet or commode that has been allocated to you. This is to help stop the infection spreading to other people.

Can I still go home if I have Viral Gastroenteritis?

As soon as your doctor thinks you are well enough, you can go home. If you are going to a residential or nursing home, you will have to wait for at least two days after your symptoms have stopped. This is because you can still pass the infection on to other people for 48 hours after your symptoms have stopped. If you are readmitted to hospital for any reason within 48 hours, please inform staff that you have been on a ward that has been restricted with viral gastroenteritis

If you, your family or friends have any questions, please feel free to discuss this with the ward staff or an Infection Prevention Nurse.

Infection Prevention Team **0113 206 6339**.