

Norovirus symptoms and how to prevent the spread of infection

Norovirus, commonly known as the winter vomiting bug (though it can occur year-round), is a stomach bug that causes sickness and diarrhoea. Currently, there are high numbers of norovirus cases being reported across the country.

Norovirus spreads easily, especially in places where people are in close contact, such as hospitals, care homes, schools and nurseries. Outbreaks can be more common in these settings.

For most people, Norovirus is an unpleasant, but short-lived illness. Most will recover fully within 2 to 3 days without needing medication. However, some groups are at risk of more severe and prolonged illness. This may include young children, the elderly and people with weakened immune systems. In these cases, medical treatment may be needed.

Norovirus spreads easily through contact with infected people or contaminated surfaces and objects. Symptoms include sudden nausea, projectile vomiting and diarrhoea. Other symptoms can include a high temperature, abdominal pain and aching limbs.

If you've got norovirus, remember:

- Stay at home. Do not return to work or send children to school/childcare until 48 hours after the symptoms have stopped.
- Good hand hygiene is important to prevent the spread of norovirus. Wash your hands often and thoroughly with soap and warm water.
- Alcohol-based hand sanitisers are not effective against norovirus.
- Disinfect contaminated surfaces using bleach-based cleaning products where possible.
- Vomiting and diarrhoea causes your body to lose water and salts, which can lead to dehydration. Drink plenty of fluids to prevent this.
- Avoid cooking and helping to prepare meals for others until 48 hours after symptoms have stopped.
- Wash any contaminated clothing or bedding with detergent at 60°C. If possible, wear disposable gloves to handle contaminated items.

To limit the spread of infection and avoid dehydration, please read [UKHSA guidance on how to prevent onward transmission](#).

If you are concerned about your symptoms, talk to your GP by phone, contact NHS 111 or visit the [NHS norovirus web page](#).

There are some situations where you may need to contact your local UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) HPT. Advice on when and when not to contact the HPT is included in [guidance for specific infectious diseases](#).