



...help stop this persistent stomach bug by keeping hands and the environment clean.

Don't let this year's winter's tale turn into a never-ending story!

## **Prevent the spread of Norovirus WASH YOUR HANDS**

For more information on infection prevention and control in practice visit [www.healthcare2z.org](http://www.healthcare2z.org)



## **Prevent the spread of Norovirus WASH YOUR HANDS**

Good hand hygiene is one of the single most effective measures for preventing the spread of infection.

Our hands move germs from one place to another. By hand washing, we remove transient micro-organisms acquired through recent contact with infected patients, or the environment.

### **Hand washing protects everyone!**

Six easy steps to clean hands...

Before you begin, wet your hands under warm running water, apply soap, and then follow the six steps, rubbing the hands together quickly and firmly for around 15 seconds.

1. Rub palm-to-palm.
2. Rub the back of both hands (right palm over left back, and then vice versa).
3. Rub palm-to-palm interlacing the fingers.
4. Rub the backs of fingers by interlocking the hands.
5. Rub the thumbs (rotational rubbing of right thumb clasped in the left palm, and then vice versa).
6. Rub palms with fingertips (rotational rubbing of right fingers on left palm, and then vice versa).

### **A thorough 15-second hand wash could save lives!**

This content is not intended nor does it replace individual professional advice. Please contact a healthcare professional or seek advice from NHS Direct (0845 46 47) NHS Direct Wales (0845 46 47) or NHS 24 in Scotland (08454 24 24 24).



# **A Winter's Tale**



**Norovirus makes its seasonal appearance in hospitals, nursing homes and schools throughout the land...**



# NOROVIRUS FACTS

**Norovirus can cause gastroenteritis, also known as the 'winter vomiting disease'.  
Gastroenteritis is inflammation of the stomach and intestines.**

## Transmission

Norovirus (also known as the Norwalk-like virus or small round structured virus) is a cause of gastroenteritis. Gastroenteritis due to the norovirus is also known as the 'winter vomiting disease'.

Gastroenteritis is inflammation of the stomach and intestines, and the viruses that cause it are usually transmitted via the faecal-oral route; however, they can be transmitted through droplets in the air or on contaminated objects in the environment. Some outbreaks have also suggested transmission via water, food and shellfish.

## Incubation

The incubation period of the norovirus is usually between 24 to 48 hours.

## Illness

The symptoms associated with gastroenteritis include:

- sickness
- diarrhoea
- fever
- abdominal cramps
- headache
- dehydration
- loss of appetite
- tiredness
- lack of energy.

If young babies contract gastroenteritis they may refuse to feed.

The symptoms are generally self-limiting and usually clear in 2 to 3 days. Medical advice should be sought if the symptoms do not improve, or if there is blood in the faeces or urine.

## Treatment

Gastroenteritis is usually a self-limiting disease and treatment is usually only given to relieve the symptoms. Plenty of fluids should be drunk to avoid dehydration. Anti-diarrhoea medications may be given to adults only.

## Exclusion

Infected individuals should keep away from work or school until 48 hours after the last episode of sickness or diarrhoea. This is to prevent further spread. Infected individuals should not share towels or face cloths, or prepare food.

In hospitals, patients may be nursed in single room accommodation with en-suite facilities. Standard precautions and transmission-based precautions should be followed.

## Notification

Gastroenteritis is not a notifiable disease.

## Complications

Severe cases of diarrhoea and sickness can lead to dehydration.

Symptoms of severe dehydration include sunken eyes, a dry mouth, confusion or irritability and little or no urine output. Dehydration in babies may lead to a sunken fontanelle.

Gastroenteritis can also cause damage to the sticky lining of the intestines which can lead to prolonged watery diarrhoea even after the initial infection has been treated.

In some cases, individuals can develop a temporary intolerance to lactose. This is due to the lining of the intestines becoming more sensitive. This can also lead to irritable bowel syndrome.

## Prevention

A high level of hygiene can help prevent the spread of the norovirus that can cause gastroenteritis. Ensure hands are washed after using the toilet, gardening and touching animals, including pets. Hands should also be washed before eating and preparing food. Keep raw meat separate from cooked meat and ensure the juices from the raw meat cannot drip onto other foods by placing them on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator.

If a member of the family contracts the infection, further spread can be prevented by keeping the toilets clean, and wiping toilet seats and handles after every flush.