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# NOROVIRUS – ALL BUT ESSENTIAL VISITORS ASKED TO STAY AWAY

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## NOROVIRUS – ALL BUT ESSENTIAL VISITORS ASKED TO STAY AWAY

Posted on Friday 16th January 2015

North Cumbria University Hospitals NHS Trust is appealing to the community for help in minimising the impact of an ongoing norovirus outbreak at the Cumberland Infirmary in Carlisle.

Norovirus is circulating widely in the community this winter and a significant number of patients at the hospital have been affected.

The Trust has already appealed to anyone planning to visit its hospitals to stay at home if they or their family members have had diarrhoea, vomiting or 'flu-like' symptoms in the last two days. Now all potential visitors are being asked to think twice and decide whether their visit is really essential.

This request is designed to keep norovirus, also known as the winter vomiting bug, out of the hospitals and away from vulnerable patients and staff who could pass it on. Children and frail elderly visitors are particularly at risk and should stay away from hospital if possible.

Symptoms of norovirus include diarrhoea and vomiting and, just like flu, the virus can seriously affect vulnerable patients.

People want to see friends and relatives in hospital as often as they can. However, by visiting while they're ill with a stomach bug, they can easily bring the virus into hospital. This can be particularly serious for people who are already ill or who have a long-term condition.

Norovirus is highly contagious and can spread rapidly anywhere that people are gathered, such as schools or offices, especially during colder months.

Gail Naylor, director of nursing & midwifery at the Trust, said: "We currently have a significant number of beds affected by norovirus at the Cumberland Infirmary, so we are appealing to the public for their help in minimising the impact of this outbreak.

"We know that sometimes visitors feel they must take every opportunity to visit sick friends or relatives, but at this time we would ask everyone to think twice and stay away if at all possible. The more people who pass through our hospitals, the greater risk of the virus spreading and affecting more vulnerable patients and hospital staff.

"Anyone who still feels they need to visit is asked to follow strict hand washing guidance and to ask staff on the ward if unsure of how to minimise the risk of infection.

"If you have had norovirus yourself, please stay away until you have been symptom-free for at least two days. If you are worried about prolonged symptoms, you can ring 111, or your GP. They will be able to provide advice for people who are at greater risk from dehydration from diarrhoea and vomiting, such as children under the age of five or the elderly."

Good hand hygiene can help to limit the spread of the infection and there are some simple steps that the public can take to help stop a norovirus spreading:

- **Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and warm water**, particularly after using the toilet, and before preparing food. If you're in an NHS facility, pay attention to hand hygiene notices such as using hand gel upon entering and leaving a ward.
- **Disinfect any surfaces or objects that could be contaminated with norovirus**. It is best to use a bleach-based household cleaner. Always follow the instructions on the cleaning product.
- **Flush away any infected faeces or vomit** in the toilet. You should also keep the surrounding toilet

area clean and hygienic.

- **Wash any clothing, or linens, which could have become contaminated with a norovirus.** Washing with hot, soapy water will help to ensure that the virus is killed.
- Although people usually recover without treatment in 24-72 hours, **it is important to stay away from work, school, college or any social gatherings until you have been free of symptoms for at least 48 hours.**

If you have norovirus, the best thing you can do is rest, and drink plenty of non-caffeinated drinks to avoid dehydration.

## ENDS

### Notes to Editors.

For more information about norovirus, visit [www.nhs.uk/norovirus](http://www.nhs.uk/norovirus)

For more information on winter health, visit the NHS Choices website at <http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/winterhealth/Pages/Winterhealthhome.aspx>

For any further information, please contact Rhia Whytock, Communications Officer for North Cumbria University Hospitals NHS Trust, on 01228 814344 or 07825 974114.

- North Cumbria University Hospitals NHS Trust is the managing Trust of the West Cumberland Hospital in Whitehaven and the Cumberland Infirmary in Carlisle.
- North Cumbria University Hospitals NHS is committed to the NHS Constitution.

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