

Beaver Road Primary School

Norovirus, better known as the winter vomiting bug, is the most common stomach bug in the UK, affecting people of all ages.

The virus, which is highly contagious, causes vomiting and diarrhoea. As there is no specific cure, you have to let it run its course, but it should not last more than a couple of days. If you get norovirus, make sure you drink plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration and practise good hygiene to help prevent the infection spreading.

Norovirus can be unpleasant to experience, but it's not generally dangerous and most people make a full recovery within a couple of days, without having to see a doctor.

Noroviruses are a group of viruses that are the most common cause of stomach bugs (gastroenteritis) in the UK. They are also known as small round structured viruses (SRSV) or Norwalk-like viruses.

Between 600,000 and one million people in the UK catch norovirus every year. You may have heard of it as the "winter vomiting bug" because the illness is more common in winter. However, the virus can be caught at any time of the year.

What should I do?

If you have norovirus, the following steps should help ease your symptoms:

- Drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration.
- Take paracetamol for any fever or aches and pains.
- If you feel like eating, eat foods that are easy to digest.
- Stay at home and don't go to the doctor, because norovirus is contagious and there is nothing the doctor can do while you have it. However, you may wish to visit your GP if your symptoms last longer than a few days.

Extra care should be taken to prevent babies and small children who are vomiting or have diarrhoea from dehydrating, by giving them plenty of fluids.

Don't worry if you are pregnant and you get norovirus: there is no risk to your unborn child.

How to stop it spreading

The virus is easily spread by contact with an infected person, especially through their hands. You can also catch it through contaminated food or drink or by touching contaminated surfaces or objects.

The following measures should help prevent the virus from spreading further:

- Wash your hands frequently.
- Do not share towels and flannels.
- Disinfect any surfaces that an infected person may have touched.

Outbreaks in busy places such as hospitals, nursing homes and schools are common because the virus can survive for several days on surfaces or objects touched by an infected person.

Health Alert