

Outbreaks of Diarrhoea and Vomiting

Infection Prevention Team

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Managing an outbreak of infection

There is currently an outbreak of diarrhoea and/or vomiting on the ward. The most likely cause is Norovirus. We are working hard to contain this outbreak and have put a number of measures in place to do this.

All staff will be “bare-below-the-elbows” which means no wrist watches or jewellery other than a wedding band. They will be wearing gloves and aprons when they are giving care or carrying out procedures. These gloves and aprons will be put in the bin and staff will wash their hands before they see another patient. It is okay to check that staff have washed their hands - if you are concerned, please speak to the nurse-in-charge on the ward.

Visiting restrictions

Relatives and friends are asked to limit the number of visitors to the ward until the outbreak is over.

Those who are frail or generally vulnerable to infection are advised not to visit.

Children of the patient are always welcome. Other visiting children should be over 12 years of age. Please discuss with the nurse-in-charge for special arrangements. The accompanying adult of any visiting child is asked to assist the child with hand washing.

Visitors should avoid eating and drinking while on the ward and are asked not to sit on the patient's bed, as these are potential infection risks.

If the patient you are visiting is infectious or particularly vulnerable to infection, is elderly, is a child, has had surgery or has a wound, then you are advised to stay within their bed area and be sure to wash your hands regularly.

Isolating patients

In order to prevent this outbreak spreading to other patients, those affected will be isolated in single rooms or in a bay with other affected patients.

Patients should remain on the ward where they are being nursed, as leaving the ward may put others at risk of infection (this means not visiting the shops or cafes).

Cleaning

Extra cleaning on the ward has also been arranged for surfaces, including bed tables, lockers and floors. Before the ward can be reopened a thorough (deep) clean of all rooms, floors and furniture will be carried out. The ward will be reopened once the Infection Prevention Team have said it is safe to do so. Once the ward has been reopened it will be safe for visitors to come in as usual.

Leave infections at home

If you or those with you feel unwell, please do not visit the hospital.

Coughs, colds, flu, chest infections, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, a rash, fever, or feeling generally unwell are all signs which suggest that you may be infectious to patients.

If you have diarrhoea or vomiting, please do not visit the hospital until at least 72 hours after your last episode of diarrhoea or vomiting. This is because you can be infectious for some time after the symptoms have gone.

If the person you wish to visit is critically ill, please speak to the ward staff first if you are unwell, but still want to visit.

Preventing the spread of infection

Handwashing

These outbreaks may be spread further by contact with body fluids or contaminated environments such as toilets and door handles. Washing your hands is essential to prevent infection being passed on.

Please wash your hands when you arrive and when you leave the ward.

You should also wash your hands with **soap and water**:

- Before preparing or eating food
- After going to the toilet
- After caring for or having close contact with someone with diarrhoea or vomiting

Alcohol gel use is a supplement to good hand washing and is not an alternative - use the gel only on clean hands.

Gifts/belongings

Bringing in gifts of fruit or food needs to be discussed with the nurse-in-charge, so that it can be stored safely. Food which is single-portion wrapped is best so that it does not become contaminated.

Personal belongings, especially those left with the patient you are visiting, should be kept to a minimum and stored in the patient's locker. This makes it easier for staff to clean the ward, which helps to reduce infection.

Please inform the nurse-in-charge if you have any concerns regarding infection prevention.

Thank you for your support in preventing infections within our hospitals.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS offers confidential information, support and advice on health related matters. Contact can be made either by telephone, email or in person and PALS staff can visit patients on wards.

Lincoln County Hospital: (01522) 707071

References

If you require a full list of references for this leaflet please email patient.information@ulh.nhs.uk

If you require this information in another language, large print, audio (CD or tape) or braille, please e-mail the Patient Information team at patient.information@ulh.nhs.uk