

Care of soiled articles

At home an ill person should normally use the toilet. If urinals and bedpans have to be used, the carer should, if possible, wear rubber gloves and a disposable apron when attending the patient.

Bedpans and urinals should be emptied into the toilet bowl and then washed with detergent and hot water, rinsed and allowed to dry.

Soiled clothing and bed linen should be washed separately in a washing machine on a "hot cycle". If the soiling is very heavy, flush away as much as possible into the toilet bowl. Take care as rough handling may cause the virus to float into the air, be swallowed and cause infection.

After loading, the outer surfaces of the washing machine should be cleaned with detergent & hot water. This is especially important if the machine is where children are likely to play.

When finished, wash and dry your hands.

Use of Disinfectants / bleach

Surfaces that have been thoroughly cleaned do not usually require disinfecting. In fact, some disinfectants are inactivated by material like diarrhoea or vomit.

If disinfectants or bleach are to be used, a good quality chlorine based bleach or a disinfectant made to a British Standard (BS 5197 or 6424) is required.

Take special care to dilute any disinfectant / bleach as instructed by the manufacturer & **never mix** different types of chemical as the fumes can be dangerous.

Store safely. Ensure that children do not have access to these solutions.

Be careful if using bleach (or chlorine releasing agents) as it will remove the colour from most fabrics and floor coverings and can burn the skin.

There is no value in pouring disinfectants down the toilet bowl.

**Further information on Norovirus can be obtained from:
the Community Infection Control Nurse
at your local Primary Care Trust (PCT)
or
your local Health Protection Unit.
or
<http://www.hpa.org.uk/topics/index.htm>**

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NOROVIRUS

An information leaflet for health and social care staff

What is Norovirus?

Norovirus, also called small round structured virus (SRSV) or Norwalk-like virus (NLV), is a common source of gastro-enteritis.

The illness they cause is often known as "winter vomiting disease." Although it is true that there is an increase in winter, unfortunately, cases occur in all seasons.

The illness characteristically starts with the **sudden onset** of severe and dramatic vomiting. This can occur with such force that it is termed 'projectile'. Some people also develop diarrhoea.

In general the symptoms usually last for about 24 – 48 hours after which the person feels lethargic/washed out for a day or so.

There are no long-term effects of SRSV infection and, even in the frail or elderly, most people will make a full recovery within 1 – 2 days.

Norovirus is **highly infectious** and may be caught:

- by direct contact with the vomit or diarrhoea of an infected person, e.g. when cleaning up.
- after direct contact with an affected person (washing hands with soap & warm water after any contact is imperative)
- from food that has been contaminated by virus from someone with symptoms e.g. fruit.
- from food that was contaminated at source, such as oysters, from sewage polluted sea.
- via inanimate objects including flat surfaces that have been contaminated with virus after someone has vomited in the vicinity.
- by breathing in and then ingesting (swallowing) the virus that is in the air around someone who has just vomited.
- possibly by breathing in and then ingesting (swallowing) virus that is in the air surrounding a person who is incubating SRSV.
- Once a person has been exposed to the virus if they get infected it usually takes between 12 and 48 hours for them to become ill.
- Norovirus is **not** caught from animals.

If Norovirus is allowed to dry on surfaces it may be able to survive in the environment for some time. Exactly how long is not known but it could be days.

Antibiotic treatment has **no** effect on Norovirus and should be avoided. Although a doctor can give an injection that will stop the vomiting this is rarely needed and may not ease the severe nausea associated with the illness.

Drinking fluids should be encouraged, especially in children and elderly people, to prevent dehydration.

Coping with someone who is ill

The person who is ill should stay at home and not go to work, school etc. until they have been completely free from symptoms for 48 hours (includes nausea).

To control the spread of the virus everyone should wash and dry their hands:

Before:

- preparing or serving food
- eating meals
- leaving the house

After:

- going to the toilet
- dealing with sick people
- handling their clothes or bedding
- contact with "sick room" equipment
- changing the baby's nappy
- preparing food
- cleaning up/doing housework

An affected person should use separate towels until they have fully recovered

Handling and preparing food

Food that the ill person may have prepared whilst symptomatic should be disposed of. If the food is to be cooked and served hot it should be safe but salads, fruit and other cold dishes have a risk of carrying the virus and making others ill.

If the person has vomited in the food handling area then it must be thoroughly cleaned up (see below) and all horizontal surfaces should be washed with detergent and hot water and then sanitised using a **1 in xx** bleach solution.

Edible items such as fresh fruit may have become contaminated by virus if they were close to the area where the person vomited. They should be thoroughly washed under running water or thrown away as a precaution.

Symptomatic people should **not** prepare or handle food for others until they have been completely free of symptoms **for 3 days** (includes nausea).

Cleaning up vomit or diarrhoea

Both diarrhoea and vomit are highly infectious so care is needed when dealing with them. Protect yourself by wearing rubber gloves and, if available, a plastic disposable apron.

Ventilate the area by opening windows.

Work to keep the area of contamination as small as possible. Soaking up excess liquid with paper towels or kitchen tissue helps with this.

A plastic dustpan is useful to scoop up the mess so it may be flushed down the toilet. When as much material as possible has been removed, the area and the dustpan should be **thoroughly washed with detergent and hot water**.

Once cleaned, the area should be rinsed with clean water and allowed to dry.

For hard surfaces, like baths and door handles, a bathroom cleanser should be used.

After clearing vomit or diarrhoea from carpets it is best to clean the area with a proprietary carpet shampoo or steam cleaner, if available. In the absence of this type of equipment a thorough cleaning with hot water and detergent will suffice. Always rinse with clean water and allow to dry before using the area again.

Horizontal surfaces in the vicinity of the vomit should be cleaned with hot, soapy water. On hard, impermeable surfaces a **1 in xx** bleach solution may be used. Furniture should be wiped over with a slightly damp cloth.

After cleaning, place disposable plastic apron & gloves, if used, in the refuse bin. Wash any equipment used (including your gloves, if reusable household) in detergent and water and allow to dry.

When finished always wash and dry your hands.

Cleaning toilets and basins

Household rubber gloves (kept for this specific purpose) should be worn, and use detergent and hot water to clean the following at least twice a day and after use by an affected person:

- Toilet seats
- Flush handles
- Toilet door handles
- Wash-hand basin taps

Cloths and gloves used for cleaning must be washed, rinsed and allowed to dry or be disposed of.