

**Why is the ward closed?  
Diarrhoea and Vomiting**

Information for relatives and visitors



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## **Why is the ward closed?**

When a group of patients have diarrhoea or vomiting which may be due to an infection, we close the ward as a precaution. It means we don't admit patients, and we avoid sending patients from this ward to other wards, hospitals, nursing or residential homes. This is to help prevent the spread of diarrhoea and vomiting to other health care facilities.

## **What causes diarrhoea and vomiting?**

Diarrhoea and vomiting can occur for a number of reasons other than infection. For example, patients might be affected by their antibiotics or have medical problems affecting their stomach or bowels. But until we are sure it is not due to an infection we have to close the ward.

If an infection is thought to be the cause of the problem, it may be due to Norovirus, also known as "winter vomiting virus" or "gastric flu". This is a very common infection that is airborne and therefore easily spread when people share rooms or live or work closely together; for example in the family home, schools, at work, in pubs, restaurants and hotels. Hospitals therefore, can be affected by outbreaks of diarrhoea and vomiting. Such outbreaks are often started by people bringing the virus into the hospital.

## **Will I catch it if I visit?**

You might, but you could also catch it from anywhere outside the hospital.

## **How does the virus affect people?**

People affected will have diarrhoea or vomiting or both. It is obviously unpleasant, but normally only lasts a day or two, and causes no lasting effects.

Hundreds of thousands of people in England catch Norovirus every year.

There is no specific treatment other than rest and plenty of fluids. Most people make a full recovery within 1 to 2 days. However, some people (usually the very young or the elderly) may become very dehydrated and require hospital treatment.

## Should I stop visiting?

Do not visit the hospital if you or your close family have had diarrhoea or vomiting. You should not visit until you have been clear of symptoms for at least 48 hours.

If you live with someone very vulnerable to infection (for example young children, elderly or those with lowered immunity) you should **not** visit during an outbreak. Even if you are in good health only essential visits are advised.

## What should I do when I visit?

Please do not cut through other wards to go to and from where you need to visit as this may increase the spread of the virus and cause further ward closures.

Please shut the door behind you when you walk onto the ward, and when you leave.

Please wash your hands with soap and water on arrival and when you leave.

If you are visiting more than one person in hospital, please visit the closed ward last, before you go home.

## **What are we doing to prevent spread?**

As well as restricting patient and staff movement, we increase cleaning in the affected ward areas using disinfectant instead of normal detergents. We ask all staff to wash their hands with soap and water instead of using alcohol gel. We ask all staff and visitors to close all doors to the wards, bays and side rooms to prevent airborne spread of the virus. We display a list of all closed areas for visitors at the main entrances.

## **Any other questions?**

Please ask the ward nurses. They will do their best to help. If they can't help, they will contact the Infection Prevention Department for you.

## **Teaching and Training**

York Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust is involved in the teaching or training of medical staff who may be in attendance at some patient consultations. However, there is an 'opt out' option for any patient who prefers to see a doctor without training medical staff in attendance.

## **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is located in the main entrance of the hospital. They can be contacted on telephone number 01904 726262, answer phone is available out of hours or via email [pals@york.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@york.nhs.uk).

## **Trust Core Values**

Meeting the needs of patients and carers is at the centre of everything we do. We hope that you found this leaflet useful and informative.

If you would like to comment on it, please contact Vicki Parkin, Senior Infection Prevention Nurse, Infection Prevention Team, The York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE or telephone 01904 725730.



If you require further information  
please contact the Infection  
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