

## Why is the ward closed?

Information for patients, relatives and carers

① For more information, please contact: The Infection Prevention and Control Team, York Telephone: 01904 725860, York Hospital or Scarborough Telephone: 01723 342395, Scarborough Hospital

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### Why is the ward closed?

When a group of patients have diarrhoea or vomiting we close the ward, or part of the ward as a precaution. This means:

- we don't admit new patients to the ward
- 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 wards and health care facilities.

### What causes diarrhoea and vomiting?

Diarrhoea and vomiting can occur for a number of reasons including viral infection. For example, patients might be affected by their antibiotics or have medical problems affecting their stomach or bowels. But until we are sure of the cause we have to close all or part of 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 easily spread when people share rooms or live or work closely together; for example in the family home, schools, at work, and in places where people gather socially. In hospitals Norovirus often starts by people bringing the virus onto the ward.

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

People affected will have diarrhoea or vomiting or both. It is unpleasant, but symptoms normally only last a day or two, and cause no lasting harm.

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

There is no specific treatment other than rest and drinking plenty of fluids. Most people make a full recovery within one to two days, although you will still be carrying the germs in your gut for a further two or three days.

It can however be much more serious for people with other medical problems, and some patients may become very dehydrated and require treatment to correct this.

## **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 who is 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 to avoid taking the virus home.

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

You may do, so consider visiting only if it is essential to do so.

## **What should I do when I visit?**

- Please shut the door behind you when you walk onto the ward, and when you leave.
- Wash your hands with soap and water on arrival and when you leave. There are hand wash sinks in all bays and side rooms. Please note that hand sanitiser alone is not sufficient protection against Norovirus.
- If you are visiting more than one person in the hospital, please visit the closed ward last before you go home.
- 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.
- If you take patient's soiled clothing home with you we would suggest that you wash it separately on the hottest wash the clothing will withstand.

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

- As well as restricting patient and staff movement, we increase cleaning in the affected ward areas using disinfectants instead of detergents.
- We ask all staff to wash their hands with soap and water.
- 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 notify all staff about the closed areas through daily outbreak emails. All outbreaks are also displayed on the trust intranet.

## **Any other questions?**

Please ask the ward staff. They will do their best to help. If they can't help, they will contact the Infection Prevention and Control team for you.

## **Tell us what you think of this leaflet**

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact: York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE or telephone 01904 725860. Scarborough Hospital, Woodlands Drive, Scarborough, YO12 6QL or telephone 01723 342395.

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

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email [yhs-tr.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net](mailto:yhs-tr.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net)

An answer phone is available out of hours.

## **Teaching, training and research**

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

## **Leaflets in alternative languages or formats**

If you would like this information in a different format, including braille or easy read, or translated into a different language, please speak to a member of staff in the ward or department providing your care.

Patient Information Leaflets can be accessed via the Trust's Patient Information Leaflet website: [www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-information-leaflets/](http://www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-information-leaflets/)

Owner	Infection Prevention Team
Date first issued	April 2006
Review Date	May 2028
Version	8 (issued May 2025)
Approved by	Infection Prevention Team
Document Reference	PIL 156 v8

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