

Information for Relatives & Visitors

Incidents of Viral Infection causing Gastroenteritis

Infection Prevention Team

We have produced this leaflet to inform you of the current situation on this ward.

Some patients on this ward have developed symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting. These are probably due to a viral infection causing common gastroenteritis. Specimens have now been sent to the laboratory to ascertain that it is not due to any other cause.

What measures are taken to help prevent the spread of viral infection?

In a ward environment viral gastroenteritis can easily spread to others because patients are nursed together in close proximity to each other and share the same bathroom facilities.

To help prevent the virus from spreading to other patients or wards we have to take a number of control measures such as:-

- Isolating the affected patient in a cubicle.
- Nursing affected patients together.
- Closing one or more bays.
- Closing one or more wards.
- Restricting affected patients from attending other departments e.g. physiotherapy, unless it is urgent.
- Delaying affected patients from being discharged to other hospitals, nursing or residential homes.

The above measures will depend upon circumstances such as the number of patients/staff affected, the seriousness of the illness and the location of the patients affected. The situation will have been discussed with senior nurses, doctors and managers and the specialist Infection Prevention Team.

The situation will be reviewed regularly throughout each day and the measures may change accordingly.

The symptoms can be extremely unpleasant, but are rarely serious, however, the very sick, frail or elderly may suffer complications. There is no antibiotic which is effective against viral gastroenteritis. The treatment consists of close monitoring of patients with symptoms and replacing fluid as necessary to make sure that patients do not become dehydrated.

Patients usually recover between 3-4 days.

What can I do to help?

You can help in a number of ways:-

- Wash your hands before and after visiting the patient.
- If required to or you choose to, please wear the protective apron and gloves as requested/suggested by the nursing staff. (They will help you to put them on and show you where to throw them away afterwards).
- Discourage frail/elderly relatives from visiting during this time. We would also advise you not to bring children onto the ward.
- If you or your family have any diarrhoea and / or vomiting, do not visit the ward until the symptoms have gone and then wait a further 48 hours. (Even though you feel better – you might still be able to spread the illness for these 2 days).
- Ask the ward staff if there is anything that you do not understand or you are worried about.

Where can I get more information?

Further information is available from the **Infection Prevention Team**. If you wish to see any of them, please ask the ward staff to contact them.

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