

Press release – March 13th, 2018

Appeal to visitors to stay away from South Tyneside Hospital to prevent spread of sickness bug

South Tyneside District Hospital is appealing to visitors to stay away if they have been feeling unwell to help prevent the spread of Norovirus.

Visitors should stay away if they have been unwell with symptoms of diarrhoea and vomiting and wait until they have been symptom-free for 48 hours before visiting relatives and friends at the hospital. Once symptom-free, they should also check with the ward before arriving.

South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust's Medical Director Dr Shaz Wahid said: "We are currently dealing with an outbreak of Norovirus, which is a very infectious vomiting and diarrhoea bug. Whilst Norovirus is the most common stomach bug in the UK and is, generally, mild, our first priority must be to protect vulnerable patients and, consequently, we are asking people to respect our current visiting guidance.

"Our infection prevention and control team are working extremely hard to prevent transmission of the illness, including constantly monitoring all ward areas to ensure that appropriate measures are in place so that affected areas can be re-opened as quickly as possible. The public have a very important role to play in helping us to protect patients and we really appreciate their support. We know how important visiting is to patients, and their relatives, friends and carers, and we are checking the situation hourly and hope that normal visiting access can be restored very soon."

The outbreak comes at a time when the NHS in South Tyneside, as in the whole of the North East, is under severe pressure and people across the region are being urged to stay away from A&E unless they are seriously unwell or in need of critical or life-saving care. This follows soaring A&E attendances in the aftermath of the recent extreme weather.

Facts about Norovirus

- Norovirus, or winter vomiting, causes a very unpleasant but, generally, short-lived illness from which people will usually recover without treatment. The main symptom is vomiting, sometimes accompanied by diarrhoea, and some people may have a raised temperature and experience headaches and aching limbs. There is no specific treatment and the illness just has to run its course. Most people make a full recovery within one to two days.
- It is estimated that Norovirus affects between 600,000 and one million people in the United Kingdom every year.
- If you think you have norovirus:
 - Stay at home and take plenty of fluids
 - If symptoms persist, ask for a telephone consultation with your family doctor. Try to avoid visiting your GP surgery or local A&E as you may pass the infection on to others
 - Wash hands thoroughly and regularly at all times but particularly after using the toilet and before eating
 - Do not visit friends or relatives in hospitals or residential care homes until you have fully recovered and have been free of symptoms for at least 48 hours to avoid putting vulnerable people at risk
 - Stay away from work or school until you have fully recovered and have been free of symptoms for 48 hours
 - Do not handle or prepare food for other people until you have been free of symptoms for at least 48 hours

General advice on choosing the right NHS service

1. Use the [NHS Choices website](#) for health advice and information about where to go to get the right treatment.
2. See your local pharmacist – your pharmacist can advise on a wide range of common illnesses. If you start to feel unwell, even if it is just a cough or cold, get immediate help from your pharmacist before it becomes more serious.

Search [nhs.uk/staywellpharmacy](https://www.nhs.uk/staywellpharmacy) for more information and to help you find your nearest NHS pharmacy and opening hours.

3. If you need medical help fast, but it's not life-threatening or an emergency, call **NHS 111** at any time for advice.
4. Get the flu jab - If you have a long term health condition or are over 65, cold weather can seriously endanger your health. Ask your GP or pharmacist for details.
5. Self-care: For many winter ailments such as coughs, colds and flu-like symptoms, people don't need to go to A&E or their local GP practice and are better off taking some paracetamol, drinking plenty of fluids and resting.
6. Stock up your medicine cabinet – make sure you have the essentials.
7. If you care for children, the [child health app](#) is free to download and offers a wealth of advice and support.

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