



# Norovirus: the winter vomiting bug

**Keep it to yourself.**

Advice for everyone



Healthier  
Scotland  
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Government

## What is norovirus?

You've probably heard of the 'winter vomiting bug' - that's what people call norovirus, just because it's more common in winter. You can catch it at any time of year though. It spreads very easily, and it can affect anyone of any age, causing **vomiting and diarrhoea**.

Other symptoms include:

- mild fever
- headaches
- stomach cramps
- aching limbs.

Norovirus is unpleasant, but not usually dangerous. There's no cure for it - you just have to let it run its course and avoid contact with other people until you feel better. That usually takes just a few days.

# How to avoid catching norovirus

There's no 100% effective way to avoid norovirus. But there are some things you can do to reduce your chances of catching it.

## **Keep your hands clean.**

Wash them frequently with soap and water, particularly after going to the toilet, and before eating or preparing food.

## **Avoid raw, unwashed food.**

Rinse fruit and vegetables well before eating them.

## **Don't share towels, flannels or toothbrushes.**

If someone in your home has norovirus, you could catch it from something they've used.

## **Keep household surfaces clean.**

Anywhere you prepare food, and your bathroom, should be kept as clean as possible using bleach-based cleaners.

# What to do if you catch norovirus

## **Keep it to yourself.**

Staying at home and keeping your hands clean can help avoid spreading norovirus to others. You can still be infectious up to 48 hours after your symptoms go, so it's best to avoid seeing other people during that time. It's especially important to avoid visiting anyone in a hospital or care home, as norovirus is more serious for people who are already ill.

## **Drink plenty of liquid.**

Water is best. This will replace the water your body loses from vomiting and diarrhoea. Avoid alcohol.

## **Eat food that's easy to digest.**

That means things like soup, rice, pasta and bread. Babies should continue with their normal feeds.

## **If you're looking after someone with norovirus...**

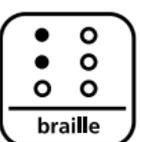
The main things to remember are:

- **Make sure they don't become dehydrated. Give them plenty to drink.**
- **If they're elderly or vulnerable, give them rehydration solutions (you can get these from your chemist).**
- **If they have symptoms for more than three days, or you're worried about dehydration, get advice from NHS 24 on 111 (free).**

Hospitals and care homes may temporarily suspend visiting if norovirus is about. This is to stop the virus spreading - especially to ill or elderly people, as norovirus can be more serious for them.

If you are due to attend hospital yourself for any reason, please remember to tell your doctor or nurse if someone in your family has norovirus.

This resource may also be made available on request in the following formats:



☎ 0131 314 5300

✉ [nhs.healthscotland-alternativeformats@nhs.net](mailto:nhs.healthscotland-alternativeformats@nhs.net)

## Where to find out more

If you have any questions about norovirus, call the NHS inform helpline free on **0800 22 44 88** (textphone 18001 0800 22 44 88). The helpline is open every day 8 am to 10 pm and also provides an interpreting service.

Visit [nhsinform.scot/norovirus](https://nhsinform.scot/norovirus)