# Health leaders warn of potential second norovirus wave in the UK



Health leaders in the UK have issued warnings regarding a "potential second norovirus wave," as cases of the vomiting bug are showing an alarming trend of individuals contracting the illness more than once. This advisory comes amid data released by the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), which indicates a noteworthy shift in the dominant strains of norovirus.

The UKHSA, which closely monitors laboratory reports of the infection, stated that prior infection with one strain of norovirus does not guarantee immunity against other variants. Notably, the GII.17 genotype of norovirus has witnessed a significant prevalence this winter, accounting for 59% of cases. However, this figure marked a decline from 76% in November. Conversely, the GII.4 strain has surged dramatically, now making up 29% of cases, increasing from a mere 10% three months earlier.

Amy Douglas, a lead epidemiologist at the UKHSA, commented on the current situation, stating, "Norovirus levels are still exceptionally high and now with multiple genotypes spreading at the same time, people could end up getting infected more than once this season." The ramifications of these infections have been most acutely felt in health and social care settings, such as hospitals and care homes, where symptoms can be particularly severe among vulnerable populations, including older adults, young children, and those with compromised immune systems.

In light of the ongoing situation, the UKHSA has advised individuals experiencing symptoms such as diarrhoea and vomiting to refrain from visiting hospitals and care homes and to avoid returning to work, school, or nursery until at least 48 hours after symptoms cease. It has also been noted that food preparation should be avoided during this time due to the potential for continued viral transmission, with hand sanitising gels proving ineffective against norovirus. The health agency strongly recommends handwashing with warm, soapy water and the use of bleach-based products for cleaning surfaces to mitigate the spread of the virus.

Hospital data from NHS England indicates that the rate of norovirus cases remains alarmingly high, with an average of 1,134 patients hospitalised daily, just shy of the peak average of 1,160 reported last week. This statistic represents more than double the rate seen during the same period last year, where daily admissions averaged 470. Moreover, NHS England has observed a 40% increase in visits to the NHS.uk webpage dedicated to norovirus, rising from 53,052 to 74,324 in just one week.

In terms of confirmed cases, UKHSA lab data from February 3 to February 16 revealed a 29.4% increase compared to the preceding fortnight, with reported cases exceeding double the five-season average for this timeframe. It is estimated that for every reported case, approximately 288 occurrences exist within the community, translating into an estimated three million cases annually across the UK.

Professor Sir Stephen Powis, the national medical director for NHS England, underlined the ongoing challenges faced by healthcare professionals, stating, "We can be under no illusions about the continued pressure staff are still facing." He urged the public to follow medical advice, including frequent handwashing and avoiding close contact with others until two days post-symptom resolution. While pressures on healthcare facilities remain severe, he encouraged the public to continue utilising NHS services as required, recommending the use of NHS 111 or 111 online for non-emergency health concerns, and reserving emergency services for life-threatening situations.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ukhsa-warns-of-potential-second-norovirus-wave> - This article supports the claim of a potential second norovirus wave in the UK, highlighting the shift in dominant strains and the risk of reinfection due to lack of immunity across different strains.
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-norovirus-and-rotavirus-surveillance-reports-2024-to-2025-season/national-norovirus-and-rotavirus-report-week-8-report-data-up-to-week-6-9-february-2025> - This report corroborates the increase in norovirus activity, noting a significant rise in cases and outbreaks, particularly in health and social care settings.
* <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/symptoms-experts-stephen-powis-health-leaders-nhs-england-b2705797.html> - This article supports the warnings from health leaders about the potential for a second norovirus wave and the challenges faced by healthcare facilities due to high case numbers.
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-health-security-agency/about> - This page provides background information on the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), which is responsible for monitoring and reporting on norovirus cases in the UK.
* <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/norovirus/> - This NHS webpage offers guidance on norovirus symptoms, prevention, and treatment, aligning with the advice provided by health leaders to manage the spread of the virus.