# NHS England warns of sharp rise in norovirus infections



The National Medical Director for NHS England has issued a significant warning regarding a sharp rise in norovirus infections across the country. Professor Sir Stephen Powis highlighted the ongoing pressure faced by health services as cases of the virus continue to surge. According to figures released this week, norovirus is affecting NHS capacity significantly, with hospital admissions nearly 150% higher than the same time last year.

The latest statistics reveal that an average of 1,134 patients were hospitalised daily due to norovirus last week, an improvement from 1,160 the previous week but still more than double the number of 470 recorded during the same period in the previous year. The surge is evidenced by the recent addition of 40% more norovirus cases, with recorded instances jumping from 53,052 between 12-18 February to 74,324 in the week following.

Professor Powis stated, “While it is good news norovirus cases dropped, they remain extremely close to the all-time high reported last week, so we can be under no illusions about the continued pressure staff are still facing." He urged the public to help mitigate the spread of the virus by adhering to essential health guidance, including frequent hand washing and refraining from mixing with others for at least two days after symptoms have ceased.

The Health and Social Care Secretary, Wes Streeting, echoed these sentiments, mentioning the substantial effort by NHS staff amid the ongoing winter pressures. He stated, “These statistics show that we are still not out of the winter woods, and I want to thank all NHS staff for their hard work in the face of substantial pressures on the health service.” Streeting noted that significant measures had been implemented to alleviate winter strain, which includes reintegrating doctors into frontline services and launching the UK’s first RSV vaccination programme.

Amy Douglas, lead epidemiologist at the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), has cautioned that certain demographics, including older adults, young children, and those with weakened immune systems, may experience more severe symptoms. “If you have diarrhoea and vomiting please do not visit hospitals and care homes or return to work, school or nursery until 48 hours after your symptoms have stopped and don’t prepare food for others as you can still pass on the virus,” she advised. Importantly, Douglas stressed that traditional alcohol-based hand gels are ineffective against norovirus, recommending soap and water instead, alongside the use of bleach-based products for surface cleaning to curb the infection's spread.

The mounting health crisis related to norovirus poses a significant challenge for the NHS as hospitals contend with high occupancy levels while continuing to serve the public's healthcare needs amidst a surge in cases.

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

## References

* <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-norovirus-and-rotavirus-surveillance-reports-2024-to-2025-season> - This URL provides data on norovirus activity in England, supporting the claim of a significant rise in norovirus infections and its impact on NHS capacity.
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-health-security-agency> - This URL is related to the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), which is involved in monitoring and advising on norovirus outbreaks, corroborating the role of Amy Douglas, the lead epidemiologist.
* <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/norovirus/> - This NHS webpage provides information on norovirus, including symptoms and prevention methods, aligning with the health guidance recommended by Professor Sir Stephen Powis and Amy Douglas.
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/health-and-social-care-secretary-wes-streeting-statement-on-nhs-winter-pressures> - This URL could potentially provide statements or updates from the Health and Social Care Secretary, Wes Streeting, regarding NHS winter pressures and efforts to mitigate them.
* <https://www.nhs.uk/news/medical-practice/norovirus-cases-surge-across-england/> - This URL might offer news articles or reports from the NHS about the surge in norovirus cases, supporting the claims of increased hospital admissions and pressure on health services.