STOMACH BUG? HEAD TO THE PHARMACY

Stomach bugs or norovirus are widespread at this time of year – but the message from NHS England is self-care at home, or if you need help head to the local pharmacist and avoid sitting in a GP waiting room.

In 2015 there were more than 650 outbreaks of norovirus in hospitals in England and 94 per cent of these led to the closure of wards or restrictions on wards.

Patients who visit their GP or a hospital with the bug also increase the danger of passing it onto others.

Symptoms include suddenly feeling sick; projectile vomiting and watery diarrhoea. Some people can have a slight fever, headache, painful stomach cramps and aching limbs too. The symptoms start around 12 to 72 hours after picking up the infection and can last up to 60 hours.

If you need help managing your symptoms pharmacists are the expert on the high street who are often situated in convenient locations and open much longer hours than GPs.

They can use their clinical expertise, together with their practical knowledge to advise patients on common problems and on whether seeing a GP is the best course of action. They can also help recommend over the counter remedies that work with any medication you’re already taking.

Dr Anand Deshpande, Chair NHS Thurrock Clinical Commissioning Group, said: “When you become ill it can be a very worrying time and heading straight to your GP is often many people’s first instinct.

“However with something like a stomach bug looking after yourself at home really is the best option - lots of fluids, plain foods and rest. Going to your pharmacist or self-help at home is a way to get quick advice without having to get an appointment and sit in a waiting room.
“If you are worried it is something more than a simple bug a pharmacist can advise if they think a visit to the doctors is needed. If the pharmacist is closed, call NHS111 who can advise you on the best course of action.”

Norovirus, sometimes known as D&V or the winter vomiting bug, can be kept at bay through good hand hygiene using soap and water rather than hand gels.

For more information on staying well this winter visit www.nhs.uk/staywell

ENDS