

BROADCAST- OSF OnCall Urgent Care offers alternatives for winter illness and injuries

With the worst flu season in more than a decade, consider the fact that if caught quickly, flu treatments like Tamiflu are available. Medications like these help reduce the severity and length of flu symptoms. Winter's arrival also ushers in more respiratory viruses that are filling up hospital emergency rooms.

If you have only minor illness, OSF OnCall Urgent Care is an alternative to a trip to the emergency department. Melissa Rule has a 5 year-old daughter Charlotte who, in addition to a recent respiratory illness, has chronic ear issues soon to be relieved with surgery, and another common childhood condition called nursemaid's elbow. It causes reoccurring dislocation because joints aren't fully developed.

OSF OnCall has been the best option for care and Rule says Charlotte now feels comfortable going to an OnCall clinic.

"You know, I know lots of children after going to the same place, they know where they're going, and they don't want to go. She knows she gets stickers and popsicles every single time, so she's fine with it. And she knows she's going to have some relief. (:12)

Rule says OSF OnCall Urgent Care typically has an easy-to-find a location when an emergency comes up.

"I pulled on her arm too quickly because she was running in front of a server, and immediately it popped out. We went around the corner to the urgent care over by Walmart, and they popped it back in. So we're very thankful for the OSF urgent care and the times that they are available after hours and especially on the weekends too." (:26)

The visit itself is also quick.

"You see the nurse; the doctor comes in [and] figures it out; nurse again; here's your paper; and you're on your way. It is a very quick turnaround time. I would say you're not sitting for 45 minutes before somebody comes in to see you. And with a child, that is very important to not be sitting there for too long, or even yourself if you're in pain." (:20)

OSF OnCall Urgent Care Operations Director Nichole Esterdahl says if someone isn't sure whether they can do a virtual immediate care visit or need to be seen in person, they can start with a website chat.

"They can go to our website and talk to our chatbot Clare, and they can tell Clare what symptoms they're having, and she can kind of help direct them to what could be appropriate as to whether they should be urgent care, ED, or if it's okay to talk with a nurse online; things like that." (:18)

For many winter-related issues such as minor coughs, colds, or falling on ice or snow, OSF OnCall Urgent Care offers a faster route to care than a trip to the emergency department.

"We do sprains, breaks. We have that equipment available. And then, dependent on the results of the X-rays, we're able to splint in clinic. We can provide some durable medical equipment, so we have crutches, walking boots, different slings and splints. And then we can also get patients connected with Ortho, so that we know they're going to get appropriate follow-up." (:24)

Esterdahl says patients have embraced the ability to schedule their visit, either in-person or virtually, anywhere from 24 to 36 hours in advance.

“It gives patients the option to either go online or call the clinic to schedule a reservation so that when they arrive to the clinic there, regardless of the wait time, they are that next patient to go into a room to be seen by a provider. So busy schedules, you know if you're coming from work or you have something in the evening, you can schedule an appointment and hopefully get right in and out.” (:21)

*****For website story or could reverse and put this into the start of the story**

Top 5 reasons people used OSF OnCall Urgent Care last winter:

1. Sore throat
2. Persistent cough
3. Viral infection
4. Upper respiratory infection
5. Suspected COVID-19