

Respiratory illnesses overwhelming hospitals, health care providers (Broadcast)

<<(INTRO:

RESPIRATORY ILLNESSES – LIKE INFLUENZA... COVID-19 AND R-S-V – ARE LEADING TO MANY PEOPLE BEING SERIOUSLY ILL... OVERWHELMING HOSPITALS AND HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS ACROSS ILLINOIS.

TAKE VO

ACROSS ILLINOIS – NEARLY 20 PERCENT OF EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT VISITS WERE FOR ACUTE RESPIRATORY ILLNESS... WITH ALMOST 8 PERCENT OF THOSE PATIENTS BEING SICK WITH THE FLU.

COMMON SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF THESE VIRUSES CAN BE HEAD ACHES... BODY ACHES... FEVERS... HAVING CHILLS AND A COUGH. SARAH OVERTON... THE CHIEF NURSING OFFICER OF OSF MEDICAL GROUP... HOME CARE AND EMPLOYEE HEALTH... SAYS THE VIRUSES ALL SPIKING AT THE SAME TIME HAVE BEEN “SOMEWHAT CRIPPLING” FOR HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS. FLU VACCINE RATES ARE DOWN THIS YEAR... OVERTON ADDS. OSF PRIMARY CARE OFFICES... MANY MEDICAL SPECIALTY OFFICES... ALONG WITH RETAIL PHARMACIES OFFER FREE FLU VACCINES.

ILLINOIS’ RESPIRATORY ACTIVITY LEVEL HAS SHIFTED BACK TO “HIGH” – ACCORDING TO THE C-D-C. OVERTON SHARES A STRONG REMINDER ABOUT HOW SERIOUS THESE VIRUSES CAN BE.

TAKE SOT | SARAH OVERTON | CHIEF NURSING OFFICER | OSF MEDICAL GROUP, HOME CARE & EMPLOYEE HEALTH

"There's a little bit of complacency or feeling like the COVID-19 pandemic is done. But these viruses can kill, and they can lead to major medical complications and hospital admissions. I've talked to some of my colleagues who are the nursing leaders in the hospitals, and patients coming in are indeed sick. If you can manage at home, we recommend you do so."

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OSF OFFERS MANY VIRTUAL TOOLS FOR THOSE WHO ARE NOT EXTREMELY ILL... BUT WANT TO START TREATMENT FAST. VIRTUAL ONCALL URGENT CARE IS AN OPTION FOR MANY OUTPATIENT APPOINTMENTS... INCLUDING VISITS WITH PRIMARY CARE PROVIDERS AND SPECIALISTS. OSF CARE TEAMS CAN EVALUATE YOU FROM THE COMFORT OF YOUR OWN HOME... AND PUT TOGETHER A TREATMENT PLAN TO GET YOU FEELING WELL SOON AGAIN.>>)

ADDITIONAL INFO/SOUNDBITES

Flu vaccine rates down

"We've got ample flu vaccine. We are behind our influenza vaccine rates of where we've been in years past," Overton says. "It's not too late to get your flu shot, it's not too late to get your pneumonia shot. If you get it at a retail pharmacy, that's great. You can also get it at OSF or another healthcare provider. We just want you to get vaccinated."

Flu vaccines are offered at OSF primary care and many medical specialty offices, along with commercial pharmacies. The [CDC's Flu Vaccine Finder](#) allows you to type in your zip code and find options closest to you. Overton also recommends speaking with your healthcare provider about the recently-approved [RSV vaccine](#) available for some.

Respiratory illnesses impacting care teams

"Unfortunately, we have had some experiences with respiratory illnesses in our staff," Overton says. "We need to do everything we can to protect them. OSF Mission Partners (employees) have started masking in those areas we know exposure is likely." Respiratory cough stations with hand sanitizer, tissues and masks are available at all OSF facilities.

How health systems being overloaded impacts patients

"When we overwhelm the health system, it could lead to delays in other critical illnesses that need to come to the emergency room or urgent care to receive adequate management," Overton says.

To protect yourself and others, Overton recommends regularly washing and sanitizing your hands. Also make sure to cover your cough to decrease the spread of respiratory droplets, which is a major way the flu and other respiratory illnesses spread.

When to head to the emergency department

"Those hallmark signs of when to see care is when a fever isn't responding to medications after 24-48 hours. Or when you're extremely uncomfortable and experiencing respiratory impacts like shortness of breath that you are struggling to breathe," Overton says.

Warning signs look different for kids and adults. The CDC breaks down symptoms to keep a close eye on:

In children

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish lips or face
- Ribs pulling in with each breath
- Chest pain
- Severe muscle pain (child refuses to walk)
- Dehydration (no urine for 8 hours, dry mouth, no tears when crying)
- Not alert or interacting when awake
- Seizures
- Fever above 104 degrees Fahrenheit that is not controlled by fever-reducing medicine
- In children younger than 12 weeks, any fever
- Fever or cough that improve but then return or worsen
- Worsening of chronic medical conditions

In adults

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Persistent dizziness, confusion, inability to arouse
- Seizures
- Not urinating

- Severe muscle pain
- Severe weakness or unsteadiness
- Fever or cough that improve but then return or worsen