

Virtual urgent care might be your best bet for respiratory virus season

As the respiratory virus season kicks into high gear, virtual urgent care is a great option.

Instead of having to wait until a walk-in clinic opens, OSF OnCall offers [virtual care options](#) that are available 24/7 year-round, including holidays and weekends. Some of issues that can be handled virtually include colds, stuffy or runny nose, cough, headache, sore throat, fever, or muscle aches, urinary tract infections, bites and stings, fatigue, upset stomach, pink eye, rashes.

If you are having difficulty breathing, that's a medical emergency and you should go straight to the Emergency Department.

Kate Barth, vice president/chief nursing officer for On-Demand Services, OSF OnCall, says consumers want health care options that are convenient, like what they're used to experiencing with online shopping and banking. That's why OSF offers lower-cost, easy virtual urgent care options, especially when a minor illness or injury happens after hours.

"It's the mom with multiple children who are sleeping and (she thinks) 'I have a sick kiddo who I cannot console and what do I do?'" Seeking out virtual urgent care in those options is such a great opportunity to connect with a provider who typically would serve you in that urgent care setting," says Barth.

For a flat fee, you can choose an online interview, or a video visit and you'll be connected with the same experienced providers you'd see during an in-person visit to an OSF OnCall Urgent Care clinic.

Individuals who want to virtually access OSF OnCall Urgent Care can select an online interview (taking between 5-15 minutes), where they're asked a series of questions about symptoms and how they're feeling. Their information will be reviewed within an hour. Using a chat feature, additional information could be requested before an OSF HealthCare provider offers a treatment plan.

If a provider needs to visualize something, a video visit is also available.

Barth says, "Maybe the provider would need to visualize the bug bite or something that looks like a rash, so we do have that video option also available to be able to assess that situation and be able to give a diagnosis in that case as well."

If treatment requires medication, a prescription can be sent to the pharmacy of the individual's choice.

What happens if the online consult or video visit reveals someone needs to be seen in-person?

"We all know there are things that sometimes can't be virtually treated," says Barth. "Sometimes a lab test may be needed, or a hands-on assessment might be needed to confirm a diagnosis. In that case, we simply refund that virtual visit knowing that it is best-case scenario for you to be seen in an actual urgent care setting."

For example, sprains and strains can usually be assessed virtually, but broken bones can only be confirmed through an X-ray, which is available at an OSF OnCall Urgent Care walk-in location.

You can find more information or start a virtual visit anytime at osfoncall.org.