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### **Hospitals Limiting Visitors Because of Flu**

Floyd Medical Center, Polk Medical Center and Cherokee Medical Center are restricting visitors beginning 5 p.m. Monday, Oct. 28, to decrease the chances of patients and hospital staff catching the flu and other contagious illnesses.

While flu cases are not widespread, Floyd is being proactive. The flu can cause serious complications and even death, especially in the very young, the elderly and those with certain existing medical conditions.

The restrictions include:

- No visitors other than immediate family members or other people approved by the patient
- No visitors younger than 13
- No visitors with flu-like symptoms, which include cough, sore throat, fever, chills, aches, runny or stuffy nose and vomiting or diarrhea

Visitors are encouraged to wash their hands frequently while in the hospital and wear protective face masks when instructed. Exceptions to these restrictions may be made for cases involving critically ill patients and end-of-life situations.

Physicians at Floyd are urging patients with the flu to visit their primary care doctor or nearest Floyd Urgent Care rather than going to the emergency room.

"If you think you have the flu, the best action to take is to visit your primary care doctor or an urgent care office as soon as possible," said Dr. Robert Holcombe Jr., Medical Director, Floyd Urgent Care.

Primary Care and Urgent Care physicians are equipped to diagnose and treat the flu, are quicker and less expensive than a trip to the ER, and by diagnosing the flu early, your doctor's office can prescribe antiviral medication that may help shorten the severity and length of your symptoms.

Common flu symptoms can be severe and appear suddenly:

- High fever
- Headache
- Chills
- Cough
- Fatigue
- Severe aches and pains
- Sneezing
- Sore throat
- Vomiting and diarrhea (more common in children)

The flu usually lasts seven to 10 days. Most people are contagious before they show any symptoms and until 24 hours after they last have a fever.

### Five Tips to Prevent the Flu

Dr. Holcombe offers these tips to help prevent the flu:

- **Wash hands often.** Use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available. This is especially important after using the restroom, before preparing food, after being in public areas and before and after caring for a sick person.
- **Stay home from work or school with any flu-like symptoms.** The CDC recommends that you stay at home for at least 24 hours after a fever is gone, except to get medical care. This fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.
- **Cover coughs or sneezes.** Cough into the bend of the elbow, and cover your nose when you sneeze. If you use tissues, throw them away immediately – and then wash your hands.
- **Don't touch your eyes, nose or mouth.** Touching any of these areas moves germs from the hands into the body.
- **Get a flu vaccine.** The flu virus will continue to circulate for weeks, so it's not too late to get the flu vaccine. The CDC recommends the flu vaccine for everyone over the age of 6 months. This vaccine can help prevent the flu or lessen its severity. Floyd Primary Care offices and Floyd Urgent Care offices have vaccines available.

### When to Go to the Emergency Room

The severity of the flu varies with each person, according to Dr. Holcombe. Those experiencing any of the following should go to the nearest hospital ER:

- Difficulty breathing
- Difficulty waking up
- Dizziness
- Confusion
- Chest pain or pressure
- Persistent, severe vomiting

To find a Floyd Primary Care or Urgent Care office near you, go to [www.floyd.org/locations](http://www.floyd.org/locations).