

## Be alert for severe flu symptoms

Influenza season is in full swing, causing aches, fever, cough and sore throat for many Oregonians. Emergency departments are busy, and people with mild symptoms who want to be seen can protect others and avoid long waits in the ER by calling their primary care provider before heading to the hospital.

Most people with flu recover with just rest and drinking plenty of fluids.

“Many people have the flu this season, but people with mild illness should see a healthcare provider only if they’re at high risk for severe illness or they develop severe symptoms,” said Richard Leman, MD, public health physician with Oregon Health Authority.

People should call 911 if someone they know with the flu has severe shortness of breath or is difficult to wake. For those 65 and older, pregnant women, children, and those with chronic medical conditions or weak immune systems who get fever with cough or sore throat, talk to a healthcare provider.

Others with mild symptoms who want to be seen should consider contacting

their own provider or going to urgent care before heading to the ER.

Flu cases in Oregon have spiked in recent weeks. Laboratories in the state reported 1,641 specimens that were positive for influenza during the week of Dec. 25-31. That’s up from 609 positive flu specimens the previous week. Most of the cases have been influenza A, this season’s predominant flu type, with one strain, H3N2, hitting the elderly population particularly hard.

Hospitalizations also have been on the rise. There were 143 hospitalizations during Dec. 25-31, which was nearly double the previous week’s total. The week before that saw just 33 hospitalizations.

There have been no pediatric deaths attributed to the flu this season, officials say. The Public Health Division does not track adult flu deaths.

Officials offer these tips for people to consider to get the care they need and help emergency rooms care for those who need it most:

- Get the flu vaccine. It’s the most effective way to prevent the flu. The fewer people who get the virus, the

fewer who will need care.

- “Know when to go.” Understand flu symptoms and their severity, and when it’s OK to just call your doctor or stay home. Most people with the flu recover in a couple of weeks, and those with mild illness do not need to go to the emergency room.

- If you are at high risk for severe illness or concerned about your illness, call your healthcare provider.

Even though most people only have mild illness, some people with severe illness do need emergency care. Adults having a hard time breathing or shortness of breath, pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen, sudden dizziness, confusion, severe or persistent vomiting, purple or blue discoloration of the lips, or seizures should be seen promptly. This is also true for people with flu who get better, then have a fever and cough that return.

Children should be seen urgently if they have fast or troubled breathing, bluish skin color, are not waking up or interacting, become so irritable that they do not want to be held, or have fever with a rash. They also should be seen if symptoms of the

flu get better but then come back with a fever and cough. Infants should get medical help right away if they are unable to eat, have a hard time breathing, do not have tears when they cry, or have many fewer wet diapers than normal.

Other ways to help prevent flu:

- Stay home and limit contact with others if you are sick, including staying home from work or school when you are sick.

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue out when you are done.

- Wash hands with soap and water. Use an alcohol-based hand rub if soap and water are not available.

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.

- Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that may have flu germs on them.

- Avoid getting coughed and sneezed on.

Flu vaccine is available from healthcare providers, local health departments and many pharmacies. To find a flu vaccine clinic, visit [www.flu.oregon.gov](http://www.flu.oregon.gov) and use OHA’s flu vaccine locator tool.

## Design for new kind of nuclear plant submitted

CORVALLIS (AP) — Oregon-based NuScale Power has submitted its design to federal regulators for a new kind of nuclear power plant, designed to be smaller and more affordable.

The company on Thursday submitted its 12,000-page application to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

The *Corvallis Gazette-Times* reports that each module is designed to generate 50 megawatts of electricity, compared to about 1,000 megawatts for a traditional nuclear power plant. Each self-contained reactor vessel could be built in a factory and shipped by truck, train or barge to its destination.

NuScale officials hope to have the first 12-module power plant on a site at the Idaho National Laboratory, a federal facility near Idaho Falls. It would be owned by the Utah Associated Municipal Power Systems.



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