

Oregon public health offers nurse advice hotline for flu questions

These days, a simple fever raises questions: Do I have the H1N1 flu and if I do, should I go to the doctor?

Before you rush to the clinic or hospital, there's a simple call you can make. Oregon Public Health Flu Hotline (1-800-978-3040) now has nurses to talk to about symptoms, prevention advice, concerns about flu exposure, taking care of others and when to see a doctor.

“Most people recover from the flu on their own with rest and fluids. But sometimes it's helpful to talk to a medical professional to decide if you need to go to the doctor,” says Paul Cieslak, M.D., medical director for the Oregon public health immunization program.

The Oregon Public Health Flu Hotline is one-stop shopping for all your flu concerns. Operators can tell callers about vaccine availability and answer many basic flu questions. The new feature connects callers with a nurse who can provide medical advice about both seasonal and H1N1 flu. These services are available throughout the state, in nearly any language, and the call is free. It could save you a trip to the doctor or emergency room, and ease crowding so that health care providers can help the people who need it more quickly.

“We want everyone in Oregon to get the best information and advice about the flu. And we want to make it easy for people to stay home when they're sick, unless they really need to see a doctor,” says Cieslak. Oregon is one of the few states to offer this service.

The Oregon Public Health Flu Hotline is open Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. – 8 p.m.; weekends and holidays 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

For additional information, visit www.flu.oregon.gov.