

NEWS RELEASE



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For Immediate Release

HALIFAX REGIONAL BEGINS FLU SAFETY PLAN *Patients/Families are Screened Outside Emergency Care Center*

ROANOKE RAPIDS, N. C. (May 4, 2009)--To protect the health of the community, Halifax Regional is screening patients and family members coming to the Emergency Care Center.

A nurse is stationed in a tent outside the Emergency Care Center to ask questions about symptoms and travel before patients and family members can enter the Emergency Care Center.

"We are taking a proactive position to screen patients and their families," said Darlene Williams, RN, administrative director of clinical effectiveness at Halifax Regional. "Our goal is to prevent exposure to the H1N1 virus."

The screening began yesterday after confirmation of a H1N1 flu case in North Carolina, in the Jacksonville area. "We implemented our safety plan using guidelines from the State Health Department and the Centers for Disease Control." She said the tent will be taken down when the situation change, based on risk and recommendations. "We are in close communication with health officials daily," Williams said.

There are approximately 125 visits to Halifax Regional's Emergency Care Center daily. If patients or family members do not have a fever and have not traveled outside the area, they can enter the Emergency Care Center as usual. "We are protecting patients and family members waiting in the reception area from possible exposure to the virus by someone who may have contracted the virus."

If the patient or family member has flu symptoms, they are placed in an isolation area where special precautions can be taken to prevent the spread of the virus to others.

Motorists traveling on I-95 increase the risk of the possible spread of the H1N1 virus. “We have a responsibility to protect both the immediate community and those traveling through our area,” Williams said. People with H1N1 may be contagious for two days before and 7 days after getting sick.

The Centers for Disease Control offers these suggestions to stay healthy:

- ▶ Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- ▶ Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hands cleaners are effective.
- ▶ Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread that way.

The CDC also urges people to avoid close contact with sick people.

- ▶ Flu is thought to spread mainly person-to-person through coughing or sneezing of infected people.
- ▶ If you get sick, stay home from work and school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

For more information, visit www.halifaxregional.us.

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About Halifax Regional

Halifax Regional Medical Center is licensed for 206-beds, including psychiatric and nursery. A non-profit organization, Halifax Regional is fully accredited by the Joint Commission. For more information, visit www.halifaxregional.us.