

**For Immediate Release**  
October 23 2009

### **Grand Itasca Stresses Importance of Flu Precautions**

**Grand Rapids** – Grand Itasca Clinic and Hospital has seen an increase in persons with influenza like illness. The H1N1 virus and Seasonal Flu virus have similar symptoms, congestion, cough, sore throat or a fever of 100 or more. Currently the Minnesota Department of Health is testing only select groups of people.

Infection control methods are currently our best methods to limit the spread of the flu. Grand Itasca, like many health care organizations, has implemented several precautions to limit the spread of the flu and to safeguard their patients, visitors and staff. Beginning on October 22<sup>nd</sup>, Grand Itasca will separate well patients from sick patients whenever possible. Well exams and other care that is intended for patients that are not exhibiting any signs of influenza (congestion, cough, sore throat or a fever of 100 or more) will be scheduled for morning appointments. Other persons that are ill and complaining of symptoms will be scheduled for afternoon appointments. If it is necessary for patients with flu like symptoms to come into the clinic in the morning a separate waiting area has been set aside to limit exposure to other persons within the facility. A similar procedure has already been implemented for persons entering the facility through the Emergency Department. Persons with flu like symptoms will also be asked to put on a mask and wash their hands before entering the facility. Necessary supplies will be available as they enter the facility.

Grand Itasca is also restricting visitors to the facility. We are asking anyone that is exhibiting any flu like symptoms to refrain from visiting patients or staff within the facility.

Additional precautions will be taken as necessary.

The Minnesota Department of Health and Grand Itasca continue to stress the following to prevent transmission of the flu (both seasonal and H1N1).

- Cover your cough
- Wash your hands
- Stay home when sick
- Call first before visit your provider – so you can be seen without exposing other to the flu. The resources below are good resources if you suspect you have the flu.

If you suspect you have the flu, the Minnesota Department of Health has implemented a flu triage line. It has combined skilled phone nurse triage lines from the major health systems in the state. These nurses can give you advice on the best things to do for the flu and whether or not

you should see your physician. The first report from the MDH indicates very heavy volumes with patients getting some busy signals and extended wait times. The MDH has indicated they are adding additional staff and lines to handle the increased volume of calls. The flu line number is 1-866-259-4655.

Grand Itasca is also taking calls but because of the increased volumes of calls and limited resources, persons may experience extended phone wait times or busy signals when they call.