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Doctor offers flu advice for UM students

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NEWS RELEASE

Sept. 25, 2009

Contact: UM Curry Health Center, 406-243-2122.

DOCTOR OFFERS FLU ADVICE FOR UM STUDENTS

MISSOULA –

Dr. Dave Bell of Curry Health Center at The University of Montana has words of advice for mildly ill students who think they might have the H1N1 flu:

Stay home and take care of yourself.

“Faculty and staff are directing students to come to Curry with even mild symptoms,” Bell said. “This is already beginning to clog up our system a bit, creating longer waiting times for really sick students. The provost has encouraged faculty not to require a doctor’s note for missed classes, since this adds to waiting times as well.”

Bell said only students who are very sick or who have risk factors should seek medical care. Most people contracting 2009 H1N1 have had mild symptoms and have not needed medical care or antiviral drugs, and the same is true for the regular seasonal flu.

The emergency warning signs for flu sickness in adults are difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen, sudden dizziness, confusion and severe or persistent vomiting.

Bell said students with these emergency warning signs of flu sickness should seek care promptly.

However, some people have risk factors that make them more likely to get complications from the flu. They should call Curry Health Center for advice at 406-243-2122 even when symptoms are mild.

People at special risk are pregnant women, children younger than 5 (especially those younger than 2) and people 65 and older. Other risk factors are people who have cancer, blood disorders (including sickle cell disease), chronic lung disease (including asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), diabetes, heart disease, kidney disorders, liver disorders, neurological disorders (including those of the nervous system, brain or spinal cord), neuromuscular disorders (including muscular dystrophy and multiple sclerosis) or weakened immune systems (including those with AIDS).

The flu emergency warning signs in children include fast breathing or trouble breathing, bluish skin color, not drinking enough fluids, not waking up or not interacting, being so irritable that the child doesn't want to be held, flu-like symptoms that improve but then return with a fever and a worse cough, or fever with a rash.

For more information visit the UM 2009 H1N1 Web site at <http://www.umt.edu> (click on the "Feature" link). The direct link to the site is <http://www.umt.edu/urelations/flu/2009%20H1N1.html>.

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