



NEWS RELEASE

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Public Health Communication

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Fresno Hospitals Reporting Severely Impacted Conditions Due to Increased Patient Admissions

Hospitals in the Fresno County area are reporting severely impacted conditions in their facilities due to a historic number of admitted patients and people accessing the emergency department with non-urgent medical problems. The Fresno County Department of Public Health (FCDPH) and Central California Emergency Medical Services (CCEMSA) are pleading with the public to **seek non-emergency care at urgent care centers, clinics, and physician's offices, or use telehealth through their insurance carrier.**

"We need everyone's help to slow down the number of people using the emergency room for non-emergency medical issues," said Dan Lynch, Fresno County Emergency Medical Services Director. Hospitals are operating at a minimum of 20%-40% over maximum capacity. Hospitals are holding admitted patients in their emergency department for up to 4 days and are using conference rooms and non-patient areas to hold patients.

Emergency department waiting times can regularly exceed 10 hours for patients not experiencing medical emergencies. Ambulances are often waiting 1-2 hours to turn over patients at the hospital. If conditions in the hospitals don't improve, hospitals may need to temporarily divert patients for a period until it is safe to re-open, which would place significant pressure on other local hospitals that remain open.

The increase in hospitalizations is due to the sharp rise in respiratory illnesses caused by many circulating viruses, including Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV), Influenza, and COVID-19. The heightened prevalence of these respiratory viruses is placing a strain on local hospitals, affecting resources for adults and children. The FCDPH and CCEMSA currently have the Assess and Refer Policy in place to reduce the impact of patients on the local emergency departments and to increase the availability of ambulances. This policy aims to slow the surge of non-emergency patients in hospital emergency departments. Ambulances will respond and assess patients. If it is determined that the patient is stable and does not require emergent transport, the ambulance personnel will provide an appropriate alternate recommendation and not transport the patient by ambulance.

Prevention measures are key to help stop the spread of respiratory viruses. The FCDPH recommends remaining up to date with the following vaccines to prevent serious illness:

- **COVID-19:** Everyone 6 months or older should get the newly updated COVID-19 vaccine.
- **Flu:** Everyone 6 months and older should get a flu vaccine annually, ideally before the end of October.
- **RSV:** Consult your healthcare provider for the RSV vaccine if you are 60 years or older. Pregnant individuals between 32 and 36 weeks should also consider vaccination between September and January. Additional immunization options are available for infants 8 months and younger and high-risk children between 8 and 19 months.

Individuals can visit <https://myturn.ca.gov> to schedule a vaccine appointment. Those having difficulty obtaining vaccines can contact their local healthcare provider or the FCDPH for help finding a place to get vaccinated. COVID-19 and flu vaccines will continue to be free for most people through their health insurance plans, including

Promotion, preservation and protection of the community's health

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Medi-Cal. The CDC's [Bridge Access Program](#) will provide free COVID-19 vaccines to uninsured and underinsured adults through December 2024. The [Vaccines For Children \(VFC\)](#) program is a federally funded program that provides vaccines at no cost to children (18 years of age and younger) who might not otherwise be vaccinated because of inability to pay.

Additional steps can be taken to safeguard yourself and others. The FCDPH recommends the following:


1. If symptoms like fever or cough arise, get tested for COVID-19 and flu. People who test positive for COVID-19 are encouraged to seek treatment. For a list of local Test-To-Treat locations, please visit www.fcdph.org/testtotreat.
2. Stay home if you are sick.
3. Wear a mask in crowded indoor public places.
4. Wash your hands frequently with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds.
5. Cover your cough or sneeze into your elbow, arm, or a disposable tissue.

For information on COVID-19 and flu, visit www.fcdph.org/noflu.

For a list of urgent care locations, visit www.fcdph.org/urgentcare.

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Do I need to go to the emergency room?

Emergency Room	Urgent Care (Walk-in)	Primary Care & Telehealth
Have difficulty breathing, or chest, arm or jaw pain	Common illness (like cold & flu)	Common illness (like cold & flu)
Experience a severe burn or electric shock	Ear aches	Ear aches
Experience seizures or a head injury where you are confused or fainting	Migraines	Migraines
Have deep wounds with heavy bleeding	Minor cuts	Minor cuts
Are dealing with a severe allergic reaction	Sprains	Sprains
Are concerned about possible poisoning	Rashes	Rashes
Have severe abdominal pain that is associated with trauma or pain/pressure in chest	 HEALTHY FRESNO COUNTY Better Together	Routine visits & less urgent medical problems