NEWS RELEASE

Ukiah Valley Medical Center

Adventist Health

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Is It The Common Cold Or The Flu?

Many people are suffering from colds and the flu this time of year and it is causing increasing concern around the country. In Ukiah, the number of Emergency Room visits has increased as people have symptoms of a cold or the flu. But how can you tell what you have? The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have developed some key facts about the flu and the common cold as well as some tips of prevention (see attached).

"Influenza, or the flu, is a contagious respiratory illness caused by the influenza viruses," according to Ukiah Valley Medical Center Infection Control Nurse, Sue Mason, RN. Symptoms of the flu include a high fever, sudden onset of headache, extreme exhaustion, a dry and severe cough, severe muscle aches, and sometimes a sore throat and a runny or stuffy nose. Other symptoms such as nausea, vomiting and diarrhea are more common among children.

"There are many differences between the cold and flu," says Mason. "A cold, while still contagious, rarely comes with a headache or high fever and never produces extreme exhaustion. A flu fever usually reaches 102 degrees Fahrenheit but can go up to 104 degrees and lasts up to four days. Colds produce mild muscle aches and often a runny nose, sneezing and a sore throat. With the flu, however, the muscle aches are severe. A runny nose, sneezing and sore throat are less common."

Vaccination is the best form of prevention against the flu, however, there are other options such as antiviral medications that can be prescribed by a doctor. The easiest ways to keep the flu from spreading are to stay at home when you have a cold or the flu, cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you sneeze or cough, avoid people you suspect have a cold or the flu, try to avoid

touching your eyes, nose or mouth and wash your hands frequently. "Washing your hands or using waterless hand sanitizer frequently is the best defense against getting sick this season," said Mason.

"If you develop the flu, drink plenty of fluids and get lots of rest," said Mason. According to the CDC, you can take medications to relieve the symptoms of flu, but never give aspirin to children or teenagers who have flu-like symptoms – and particularly fever – without first speaking to your doctor.

For more information on the flu visit www.cdc.gov

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Ukiah Valley Medical Center is part of Adventist Health, a not-for-profit, faith-based health system operating in California, Hawaii, Oregon and Washington. Founded on the Seventh-day Adventist heritage of Christian health care, Adventist Health is comprised of 20 hospitals with more than 3,100 beds, 18,800 employees, numerous clinics and outpatient facilities, 16 home care agencies and three joint-venture retirement centers. For more information, visit www.uvmc.org or www.adventisthealth.org.