

NEWS RELEASE

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Rice Memorial Hospital revises visitor policy for the holiday season

WILLMAR, Minnesota. (Dec. 3, 2009) – Rice Memorial Hospital announced today that additional visitor restrictions have been implemented for the holiday season. Group tours have been discontinued for the months of December and January, and caroling will not be allowed at any time, even in public areas of the hospital. “We appreciate carolers, and they have been a great benefit to our patients in past years,” says Chief Administrative Officer Dale Hustedt. “It’s wonderful to welcome them when conditions are right, however, H1N1 continues to be a threat and the seasonal flu can begin as early as December, so we are restricting group tours and caroling at this time in order to help protect our patients.”

Influenza is always a potentially serious, life-threatening illness, especially for people at high risk of complications. Those with underlying health conditions appear to be at increased risk, as do children and pregnant women. While older adults appear to be at lower risk than other groups for becoming ill with 2009 H1N1, they are among those at highest risk for complications from seasonal flu.

Visiting continues to be limited to close family only. Those visiting patient rooms are asked to put on a mask and to wash their hands or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer before entering the room and before leaving the room. Those visiting the third floor of the hospital, which includes Maternity and Pediatrics, are asked to stop at the Nurses’ Desk before visiting the patient’s room.

People coming to the hospital for medical care are still being asked to put on a mask if they have any of the following flu-like symptoms: fever of 100° or higher; sore throat; cough; or body aches; or if they have had close contact to someone with a confirmed or suspected case of H1N1 flu. The temporary curtain that divides the Emergency Department Waiting Area remains in place to separate patients with influenza-like symptoms.

Rice Memorial Hospital appreciates the community’s understanding for the need to limit visitors during this long flu season. For more information about Rice visitor policies, H1N1, and seasonal flu, please visit www.ricehospital.com.

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