

## Flu Claims Two Lives in Odessa, Doctors Say Don't Panic

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ODESSA - The flu has gotten a slow start in the Basin, but one strain is here, and it has proved to be deadly. The Ector County Health Department confirmed that two West Texans died from the H1N1 strain of the virus.

"There's thousands and thousands of people die every year all across the United States," Dr. Sudip Bose, a surgeon at Medical Center Hospital, said.

He said what ends up causing death is when the flu becomes extreme and causes other organ failure and dehydration.

"Those are things that if they're occurring, you're going to know you need to go to the emergency room. You start coughing up blood, and have severe respiratory distress," Bose said. "It spreads to your brain and you're just completely altered and confused."

The two, who were in their fifties, were treated at the Medical Center Hospital in Odessa. Officials haven't disclosed whether there were other complications aside from the infection but doctors did say these deaths shouldn't alarm people and that the H1N1 strain is just like any other among the flu virus.

"The vast majority of those who have H1N1 still do okay," Bose said.

He added that a person who has H1N1 doesn't show anything symptomatically different than what would be found in any other variant of the flu virus. It's just a matter of which antigens are on the virus.

According to the Centers For Disease Control, those who two years of age or younger and people over the age of 65 are more at risk from the virus as their immune systems are weaker at fighting off infections.

So Dr. Bose warns people from going to the emergency room where they're at risk of picking up more harmful substances than getting better and also that opting out of getting the vaccine is a selfish decision.

"If you sneeze or cough on a really young baby or an elderly person, someone with lung disease, they may really suffer a lot from it. So it's about helping others and making that responsible decision," he said.

Doctors say for young children who have the flu, you can perform the "Smile Test" - even if they're sick, as long as you're able to get a smile or tickle it out of them, they should be fine. For everyone else, it's rest, fluids, and everything grandma told you to get better.

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