



DON'T DELAY CARE: HOSPITALS ARE SAFE, READY & WAITING

Key Messages

- It's important that people continue to seek care during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially those with conditions that need follow-up attention.
- With the stay-at-home measures and fear of catching COVID-19, people may be thinking twice before deciding what merits a visit to the doctor's office, an urgent care clinic or the emergency room. There are ways to stay safe and protected when seeking needed care during the pandemic.
- It's important for people to continue to obtain care in-person or remotely when medical attention is needed, especially those with pre-existing or chronic conditions that require follow-up with a health care provider.
- Not getting care, particularly for chronic illnesses and urgent or emergency conditions, puts people at high risk for complications later.
- Hospitals have safety precautions in place as well as infection control measures that apply to every patient and health care worker.
- The risk for patients of contracting the virus is low, since hospitals are isolating COVID-19 patients from non-COVID-19 patients, have rigorous screening procedures and strict visitor policies in place.
- Delaying care and treatment can cause complications and long-term health problems such as irreversible brain and heart damage, disability, amputation and fatalities.
- Older adults are especially at risk because they are more likely to have cardiovascular disease, diabetes and other chronic medical conditions that make putting off emergency care especially risky.
- Hospitals are prepared to handle a surge in all types of patients, so there should not be a worry of overburdening medical providers.
- Doctors recommend calling 911 and going straight to the ER for any of these red-flag symptoms: acute chest pain, shortness of breath, fainting, weakness, difficulty speaking, changes in vision, acute headache or abdominal pain that's severe or does not resolve in a few hours.

Social Media Posts


- If you're hurt, we're here. DC's hospitals are always open and ready to care. Your health is our priority, don't delay care. #DontDelayCare
- Safe. Ready. Waiting. DC's emergency rooms are prepared for your emergency 24/7. Your health is essential, don't delay care. #DontDelayCare
- District of Columbia Hospitals are safe, ready and waiting. We are committed to provide safe, quality care. #DontDelayCare
- Emergencies don't wait. If you're experiencing a health crisis, your local hospital is safe, ready and waiting. While the world has paused, prioritizing your health has not. #DontDelayCare



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Article/Op-Ed/Newsletter Content

Don't Delay Care in Fear of COVID-19

Patients are always the top priority for health care providers. Today some patients who need medical attention have become reluctant to leave their homes and seek necessary assistance from nearby hospitals and emergency departments out of fear. The District's hospitals encourage you not to forgo needed medical treatment amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Please seek emergency care when needed.

There are many fears associated with this pandemic and social distancing measures are important to limit the spread of the coronavirus, but your health is essential and hospitals, doctors and nurses are safe, ready and waiting to provide the care you need, when you need it.

Health care providers have special processes in place to protect patients during emergencies and normal medical care. Hospitals have implemented extra precautions during the pandemic and emergency departments remain a safe place for emergency medical care. Providers have rigorous screening procedures in place, restricted visitors, check temperatures for the presence of a fever, and increased cleaning protocols. The risk for patients of contracting the virus is low because of the use of personal protective equipment and isolation practices.

Prolonged medical isolation when you are experiencing concerning symptoms may have a detrimental effect on your health. It is important for individuals to continue to obtain emergency care in-person when medical attention is needed, especially those with pre-existing or chronic conditions. Older adults are especially at risk because they are more likely to have cardiovascular disease, diabetes and other chronic medical conditions that make putting off emergency care especially risky. Health care providers have seen a surge in telehealth, which has made monitoring health conditions and routine care easier and convenient. Telehealth visits can't always replace in-person visits or urgent or emergent care when the symptoms are severe and indicate a need to seek hospital care.

If you are having symptoms that could possibly be an indicator of a medical emergency, such as chest pain, difficulty breathing, trouble lifting your arms and weakness, doctors recommend calling 911 or visiting your nearest emergency department. Heart attacks and strokes don't stop during a pandemic, so if you are experiencing these symptoms, please don't delay in seeking emergent care.

The advice is straightforward: If you are experiencing significant symptoms of increasing chest pain or shortness of breath this may indicate you are at risk for a heart attack, which is much more life-threatening than the risk of COVID-19 exposure. Please contact your physician for instructions or come to the emergency department for care. It could save your life.

Don't Delay Care Video (<https://youtu.be/qdEuruLTKDg>)

