Coming to the Emergency Department During a Pandemic

Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, many people across the country have delayed seeking emergency care due to the fear of contracting COVID-19 in a hospital setting. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), during just the early pandemic period, the total number of U.S. ED visits was already about 42% lower than during the same period a year earlier.

However, emergencies such as heart attack or stroke still pose a risk during a pandemic. OSF HealthCare is encouraging people to go to their closest emergency department when emergency care is needed.

SOT

Bill Walsh, M.D., Chief Medical Officer, OSF Little Company of Mary Medical Center

"We want to make sure that our community feels comfortable coming to Little Company of Mary Medical Center. Our emergency department is clean. It is roomy so there is enough room to separate patients. It is safe for you to seek the care that you need. It is very important that you feel comfortable coming if you think you have a serious problem."

Dr. Walsh encourages community members who are experiencing symptoms that may signal a serious health issue to seek care as soon as possible in the closest emergency department.

SOT

Bill Walsh, M.D., Chief Medical Officer, OSF Little Company of Mary Medical Center

"I don't think that the risk of being in our emergency department is any higher than the risk of going to the grocery store or any other essential activities that you have to do. So if you are experiencing chest pain, if you're concerned that you may have had a stroke, if you have paralysis on one side of your body, one of your extremities, paralysis of your face, if you're having significant abdominal pain, if you have an injury or you think you have a broken bone, if you're having bleeding, if you're having difficulty breathing, and even fever – you need to come to an emergency department to be evaluated."

All OSF HealthCare emergency departments have made sure they can safely treat all patients by screening and isolating any patients believed to be at risk of COVID-19.

SOT

Vince Fagan, CHESP, T-CHEST, LEED-GA, Manager, EVS/Transportation at OSF Little Company of Mary Medical Center

"Cleaning and disinfection of high touch areas such as door handles, telephones, handrails – anywhere where our hands touch much more frequently than other places. Elevator buttons, those are high touch areas. And the reason that this is so important is because we cannot see pathogens. We pay specific particular attention to those areas in addition to our regular cleaning anyway. So those are enhanced strategies that we use now to keep everybody safe and keep everybody healthy."

Cleaning measures have been enhanced across the entire 14-hospital system to ensure the safety of all who are seeking care.

SOT

Vince Fagan, CHESP, T-CHEST, LEED-GA, Manager, EVS/Transportation at OSF Little Company of Mary Medical Center

"By standardizing our training, we reduce risks, we improve process, we kill more pathogens. At the end of the day, the impact is we give a cleaner, healthier, safer environment for our patients. So, if we move from the training at Little Company of Mary Hospital to Peoria to Ottawa, you're going to see the same process being done."

If you or a loved one is experiencing a medical emergency such as heart attack or stroke, the fastest and safest way to get the care you need is by calling 911.

For more information on COVID-19, including frequently asked questions, please visit the OSF HealthCare COVID-19 digital health hub: www.osfhealthcare.org/covid19/. If you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, you can connect through Clare, a digital assistant available through the OSF website, or by calling the 24/7 nurse hotline at 833-OSF-KNOW (833-673-5669).