

UW Health: Seeking heart attack care during COVID-19

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MADISON, Wis. - Since the onset of COVID-19, hospitals nationwide have seen a precipitous decline in the number of heart attack patients seeking treatment, and University Hospital is no different. Since early March, UW Health has experienced an approximate 30 percent decrease in the number of people presenting to the emergency department with symptoms, creating concern among cardiologists here that people are potentially putting their lives at risk by avoiding timely treatment.

UW health is urging anybody who experiences any of the following symptoms of a heart attack to call 911 immediately: Chest pain/discomfort for more than a few minutes, shortness of breath, excessive sweating, discomfort in arms, back, neck or jaw; nausea or vomiting; and lightheadedness.

“We know that time equals heart muscle, and the sooner a heart attack patient is seen by a cardiologist the better the odds that patient will have a good outcome,” said Dr. Amish Raval, UW Health cardiologist. “But if patients either delay or refuse to seek care altogether, we know the chances of them losing heart muscle goes up exponentially, resulting in heart failure, decreased quality of life, potential future heart attacks, or death.”

Despite the COVID-19 crisis, local EMS providers, the UW Health Emergency Department and University Hospital’s team of cardiologists continues to deliver the highest level of care to patients with life-threatening conditions, like heart attacks and other emergent needs.

Resources available to news media:

- Video interview with UW Health cardiologist Dr. Amish Raval
- B-roll of cardiologists in UW Health Catheterization Lab
- Interview with recent heart attack victim who called 911 and survived