

# UW Health: Warns community of hospital reaching capacity

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*With COVID-19 cases exploding, hospital space and staff are limited*

MADISON, Wis. – UW Health facilities are very full, and the latest surge, driven by the Omicron variant of COVID-19, could overwhelm a very stretched hospital and make access to hospital beds and medical personnel very challenging in the coming weeks.

If this trend continues, the health system might not have the space and staff required to care for the number of patients it is seeing, according to Dr. Jeff Pothof, emergency physician and chief quality officer, UW Health.

“Our staff have been incredible, and they continue to provide the best care even in these difficult circumstances, but ultimately we are struggling to accommodate the volume of patients we’re seeing, and that volume is increasing,” he said.

UW Health is taking several actions to manage patient volumes. It is able to reduce the number of non-essential procedures it schedules within a given time, which helps ensure staff are available for urgent needs. It can also convert spaces to accommodate more COVID-19 patients and the health system is not concerned about supplies at this time, but ultimately it only has enough staff trained in critical care for so many patients.

COVID-19 is not the only concern, either.

“When hospitals are as full as ours is right now, access to doctors and a bed when you have a heart attack, a stroke or a car accident are a major concern,” Pothof said. “We’re dangerously close to the point where there just aren’t resources for all of those cases. You think it can’t happen to you, but it can if we continue to stay on this trajectory.”

Experts urge community members to get vaccinated against COVID-19 and influenza as soon as possible, and to get a COVID-19 vaccine booster as soon as you are eligible. These simple actions could be lifesaving, not just for you but for others who may need those doctors and those beds. The number one thing you can do to support healthcare heroes who continue to care for high volumes of very sick patients is to get vaccinated and follow smart public safety guidelines during this surge.

“Do it for yourself, your family, your friends, and for the nurses and doctors who are watching hospital beds fill up and don’t want to have to find one for you,” Pothof said.

Pothof is available for interviews today 10-11 a.m. and 1:30-2:30 p.m.