



## **Emergency and Necessary Medical Care**

May 6, 2020

The Utah Medical Association is very concerned about individuals delaying or avoiding treatment during a medical emergency. Delaying care can cause permanent harm or even death. Because of fears of COVID, we know that individuals are delaying going to an emergency room for serious accidents, heart attacks, strokes, and other serious medical situations. While COVID has been the focus for the past few months and will continue to be a focus moving forward, it is very important that individuals do not delay care for serious medical conditions and emergencies. There are about 1.5 million heart attacks and 500,000 deaths from heart attacks every year in the United States. There are also 140,000 deaths from strokes annually and approximately 795,000 people suffer a stroke each year. We know that death rates will increase if individuals delay seeking medical help for serious conditions and symptoms.

Serious medical conditions or warning signs of a medical emergency include but are not limited to:

- Chest pain
- Loss of consciousness or change in mental status (confusion, unusual behavior)
- Difficulty breathing
- Severe head pain or injury – including loss of vision
- Uncontrolled bleeding
- Severe burns
- Feeling suicidal or homicidal
- Sudden, severe, or extreme pain – particularly if the cause is unknown
- Suspected poisoning or drug overdose
- Severe abdominal pain or pressure
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Injury from serious motor vehicle accident, burns, deep large wounds or other serious injuries

Fear of contracting COVID should NOT cause an individual to delay seeking care, particularly in these situations.

Individuals should also not delay seeking care for serious health conditions, such as chronic conditions including diabetes, lung or heart disease, chronic kidney disease, mental health disorders and many others. If care is delayed for these conditions that must be managed and watched, Utah will see more harm and higher deaths for these conditions that have nothing to do with COVID. Individuals in these situations are often more prone to get severely ill with COVID, if contracted, and so should be watched and monitored closely.

Emergency physicians and other physicians are trained to deal with diseases and issues of contamination and the spread of infections and know what conditions should be treated, how often and when care can or should not be delayed.

Please head to the emergency room if you have serious medical conditions/emergencies that should be treated immediately in an emergency room. IT IS SAFE!

Also, contact your physician to treat other serious conditions and they will advise you how best to receive care and when to receive care.