

### Commentary: Don't let fear keep you from getting medical care

May 28, 2020 - Comments: 0  
By Wayne Smith

With more than 5,000 confirmed cases of coronavirus in our state, Delawareans have steered away from their typical activities to stay home, practice social distancing, and help to keep themselves and their neighbors safe. Staying home is critical to slow the spread of COVID-19, but not at the expense of your health. If you are sick, particularly if you are experiencing an emergency, don't delay seeking medical care. Delaware hospitals and health care delivery systems are safe and ready to care for you.



Hospitals across the country have reported cases where patients with serious injuries or illnesses have delayed seeking medical care out of concern that they may come in contact with COVID-19. As a result, their condition worsens and can even become life-threatening. Please don't make this mistake! Delaware hospitals are safe and open 24/7 to meet your urgent health care needs, including non-COVID-related emergencies. Delaware hospitals have taken extraordinary steps to ensure the safety of their patients and health care workers and to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Separate waiting areas and treatment rooms have been established to isolate COVID-19 patients. Hospital staff have undergone thorough training on the use of personal protective equipment to keep themselves and their patients safe. Separate care teams are used for COVID-19 patients as an added barrier of protection, and regular cleaning and disinfecting of commonly touched surfaces occurs around the clock. Visitor restrictions are in place with certain exceptions, including allowing a parent or guardian to accompany a pediatric patient.

A delay in care for COVID-19 patients can also have grave consequences. Some of our hospitals, particularly those in Sussex County, have reported instances where patients who are seriously ill with COVID-19 do not come to the hospital until they are at the critical stage and in need of a ventilator to breathe. Waiting until this point to seek care puts the patient's life in jeopardy, as doctors and nurses are not able to use less invasive interventions that could have improved the patient's health before they reached the critical point. We understand that some of these cases are occurring within communities in Delaware that have expressed fear or uncertainty about visiting health care providers and hospitals. Your health and safety is our number one concern, and your privacy will be protected if you seek medical treatment. Do not delay coming to the hospital if you are seriously ill, as it may mean the difference between life and death.

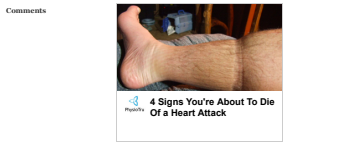


If you are experiencing mild symptoms of COVID-19 – sore throat, cough, shortness of breath, and fever – stay home and call your health care provider. Your provider will screen you and determine if you are in need of a COVID-19 test. If needed, you will be referred to a hospital testing site. If you do not have a primary care provider, call the Division of Public Health Call Center at 1-866-408-1899. If you are experiencing a medical emergency, such as difficulty breathing, please call 9-1-1 and alert the first responders that you suspect you may have COVID-19.

Delaware's behavioral health hospitals are also safe and ready to assist if you or your family members have mental health or substance-use-related needs. In addition, Telehealth services are available for non-emergency behavioral health needs. Don't delay seeking help if you are in need of care. Delaware's hospitals and health care delivery systems are safe everyone, adults and children alike, and ready to care for ALL of your urgent health care needs during this pandemic.

Wayne Smith is president and CEO of the Delaware Healthcare Association. The Opinion page is populated with letters from you, our readers. The Delaware State News was founded on and still is dedicated to the basic principle of civility and respectfully sharing ideas to create a better community for us all. To submit a letter to the editor, visit the [Submit a Letter](#) page.

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