



**News Release
For Immediate Release**

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**WellSpan Health doctors urge community not to ignore emergency care needs
during COVID-19 pandemic**

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues across the United States, WellSpan Health is urging community members not to ignore emergency medical matters that may arise.

Since late March, hospital officials have noticed a 50 percent drop in patients seeking care at WellSpan Health's six hospital emergency departments across southcentral Pennsylvania with some patients ignoring the early warning signs of issues like heart attack or stroke.

"When it comes to stroke care we say time is brain. How quickly patients receive treatment is critical," said Grant Sorkin, M.D., WellSpan neurosurgeon and surgical director of the Comprehensive Stroke Center at WellSpan York Hospital. "At our stroke center we're able to diagnose and treat patients rapidly, but only if the patient acts on the early warning signs. It can be a life-saving move when seconds count."

Data from large health systems across the country show younger patients in their 30s and 40s that are COVID-19 positive may be experiencing strokes at a higher rate than non-COVID-19 patients in their age group.

Early warning signs of a stroke can include face drooping, arm weakness, speech difficulty or disorientation. Individuals experiencing these symptoms should dial 911 or seek immediate medical attention at one of the six Comprehensive or Primary Stroke Centers across WellSpan Health.

Doctors at the health system have also heard from patients experiencing serious medical issues, including behavioral health concerns, and choosing not to come to the hospital and getting the care they need for fear of contracting COVID-19 within the building.

WellSpan takes the safety and security of its facilities seriously. To protect patients WellSpan has taken the following measures within the hospitals:

- **Dedicated COVID-19 patient care area** – Patients who have tested positive or those that are showing symptoms of COVID-19 are isolated to specific treatment areas. Those patients are treated by a care team assigned to only COVID-19 patients.
- **Limited entry points at all hospitals** – All staff, patients and visitors will enter the hospital at designated entry points where they will be screened prior to entering. Staff who screen positive are evaluated by Employee Health and Safety department before they can return to work.
- **Visitor restrictions** – By limiting visitation to specific types of patients, we can maintain social distancing and help prevent exposure to COVID-19.

- **Protecting our staff** – All staff members working in COVID-19 patient care areas, screening areas and emergency departments are required to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) including masks, gloves, gowns and eye protection. Our staff is trained in the proper use of PPE.
- **Safety for all** – All hospital staff are now required to wear the appropriate mask during their shift and our patients are also encouraged to wear face coverings to prevent any spread within our hospitals.

“Be mindful of symptoms of a stroke or heart attack and take action when necessary,” said Mark Goedecker, M.D., vice president and regional medical director, WellSpan Medical Group. “In an emergency we want to make sure we see our patients as quickly as possible, to determine the best way to treat them when time is critical.”

For more information about WellSpan’s response to this pandemic, visit www.WellSpan.org/Coronavirus for the latest updates and information about preventing the spread of COVID-19.

To learn more about WellSpan’s Comprehensive and Primary Stroke Centers, visit www.WellSpan.org/Stroke.

About WellSpan Health

WellSpan Health is an integrated health system that serves the communities of central Pennsylvania and northern Maryland. The organization is comprised of more than 1,600 employed physicians and advanced practice clinicians, a regional behavioral health organization, a home care organization, eight respected hospitals, approximately 20,000 employees, and more than 200 patient care locations. WellSpan is a charitable, mission-driven organization, committed to exceptional care for all, lifelong wellness and healthy communities. Visit WellSpan.org.

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