

Experiencing Stroke Symptoms? Don't Delay Getting to the ER

Wooster Community Hospital Health System (WCH) is commemorating Stroke Awareness Month this May. A stroke is a serious medical emergency that is best treated within 4.5 hours of showing symptoms. WCH median time to treatment with IV t-PA (clot busting medication) is 45 minutes, 15 minutes faster than the national benchmark for acute ischemic stroke treatment.

“Stroke is the number-one cause of disability in the United States,” says Karrie Boss, APRN, Critical Care Clinical Nurse Specialist and Stroke Program Coordinator at WCH. Survivors may have difficulty thinking clearly, holding conversations, swallowing, walking normally, or functioning as they once did. This can lead to depression, financial struggles and strained relationships.

The acronym “BE FAST” can help you remember the signs and symptoms of a stroke. Symptoms of stroke come on SUDDENLY and include:

- **B**alance (unsteady walking, dizziness)
- **E**yes (vision changes-blurry vision, double vision)
- **F**ace (drooping on one side of the face)
- **A**rm (weakness in the arm or leg)
- **S**peech (which may sound slurred or garbled)
- **T**ime (act quickly and call 911, even if symptoms are mild).

Always call 911 when experiencing any symptoms of a stroke, Boss says. The dispatchers will alert the WCH stroke team, so they are ready when the patient arrives to the ER.

WCH is the only Primary Stroke Center in Wayne County offering a full spectrum of stroke care. WCH also partners with the OSU Wexner Medical Center in a “telestroke” program that helps the ER doctor diagnose and treat stroke or decide to transfer the patient if necessary.

Boss notes that WCH has seen an increase stroke cases, partly due to clotting issues related to COVID-19.

“The hospital is the safest place to be when having a stroke,” Boss says. “Time is of the essence...please do not delay care.”

Any questions regarding the WCH Primary Stroke Center you can call (330) 263-8495.