HealthEssentials

Where smart medicine and caring people serve our community

Should you stay or should you go?

Making the emergency room decision

Deciding when an injury or illness warrants a trip to the emergency room (ER) can be a difficult decision. For advice, we asked Ronald Willoughby, DO, a primary care physician at Virtua Memorial.

"An emergency is a medical condition or set of symptoms that a person feels could place him in jeopardy or threaten bodily function."

Symptoms that warrant immediate medical attention can include, but are not limited to:

Adult emergencies

- Chest pain (burning, heaviness or tightening)
- Abdominal pain
- Inability to use a body part and/or numbness or pain in a limb (such as arm or leg)
- Loss of bowel or bladder function

Pediatric emergencies

- Persistent or very high fevers
- Seizure-like activity
- Significant or increased lethargy
- Pain from ears and/or throat
- Traumatic injury

Of course, when in doubt, it's best to err on the safe side and go to the ER.

Choosing the right ER

Once you've decided to go to the ER, it's important that you choose the right hospital. "It's best to choose an emergency room located in a hospital that provides all the services you may need, so you don't have to be transferred for treatment," says Dr. Willoughby. "Immediate care produces better outcomes."

Virtua Memorial – the only full-service hospital in Burlington County – has the long-term experience of treating everything from a heart attack to stroke; from a severe orthopaedic injury to the baby who arrives just a little too early. In some cases they even bring the emergency department to the patient.

Virtua employs more than 165 paramedics in the Mobile Intensive Care Units to accelerate the diagnosis before a patient arrives in the emergency room. EKGs can even be conducted in the ambulance and the results can be transmitted directly to the physician at the hospital.

A medical emergency is a stressful event, but the Virtua Memorial team strives to make it as manageable as possible.

MEET THE PHYSICIAN

Ronald Willoughby, DO

Internship & Residency:
Metropolitan Hospital, Philadelphia

Medical School:
Philadelphia College
of Osteopathic Medicine

For appointments, call 1-888-VIRTUA-3.

Virtua Memorial

Virtua Memorial is the only full-service hospital in Burlington County, providing:

- **Cardiology**
- **Maternity & neonatology**
- **Pediatrics & pediatric emergency care**
- **Orthopaedics**
- **General medical care**
- **Oncology**
- **Neurosciences**
- **Specialty surgical care**
- **Geriatric medicine**
- **Behavioral health**

In an emergency, you need every option possible.

When you're facing an emergency

Steve Kolesk, MD
Vice President and
Chief Operating Officer
of Virtua Memorial

Few things are worse than being confronted with a medical emergency. Whether it's a broken bone, a stroke or a pregnancy emergency, we are always grateful and relieved when emergency medical personnel come to the rescue.

Applying emergency treatment in the field and getting us to the hospital fast is what our emergency medicine squads do extremely well. But what role should we as patients or family members have in choosing where to go?

As a family physician, I tell my patients, friends and family members that it is important to be well informed about the healthcare services in the area where you live. It can mean the difference between a successful and unsuccessful outcome.

How can you know where to go? It's best to go to a hospital that has all the services and specialties related to your emergency so you won't have to be transferred from one hospital to another.

The best case in point is stroke treatment. What happens in the first few hours after the stroke can affect you for the rest of your life. At Virtua Memorial, our emergency room offers the services of an emergency neurologist round-the-clock and the hospital's stroke unit is designated by the state as a primary stroke center and accredited by the Joint Commission. Getting to that kind of service fast means that you can get the right treatment – without delays or hospital transfers.

Virtua Memorial is a full-service hospital with comprehensive services in maternity care, orthopaedics, stroke care, heart attack care, cancer treatment, pediatrics and a wide range of other services. When an emergency strikes, you know you can count on Virtua Memorial.

Receive expedited care at Virtua Memorial's fracture center

There are 350,000 hip fractures each year in the United States – most occur in adults age 60 or older, often as the result of a fall. A fracture in a senior can be a traumatic event, however, an expedited treatment plan can help patients to rapidly return to their pre-injury lifestyle.

The Fracture Center at Virtua Memorial hospital is now available for these specific patients. The center is designed to treat fractures quickly and manage pain effectively from the moment a patient arrives at the hospital.

Individualized care

To manage the unique needs of each individual, the patient is co-managed by an orthopaedic surgeon and a primary care physician or geriatric specialist. The team collaborates on all aspects of care, including controlling pain and when necessary, expediting surgical intervention.

If surgery is necessary, the goal of the fracture center is to have patients in the operating room within 24 hours. This expedited treatment is especially important for seniors who, within just a few days of a hospital stay, could experience confusion, memory problems and weakened muscle tone. Recovery and healing are then managed with clinical specialists on a designated unit to focus on the special needs of a senior.

Seamless care

After the hospital stay, the Virtua Memorial team transitions patients to the next stage of healing with rehabilitation at the Health and Rehabilitation Center in Mt. Holly. The patient's care team also establishes a maintenance plan with the bone health and osteoporosis clinicians to improve bone health and reduce the risk of reoccurrence.

Virtua provides seamless care throughout the healing process. The best treatment, however, is prevention.

Risk factors

Falls are the number one cause of fractures.
Falls may be the result of:

- Loss of balance
- Medication side effects
- Poor vision
- Impaired mobility
- Environmental problems
- Osteoporosis

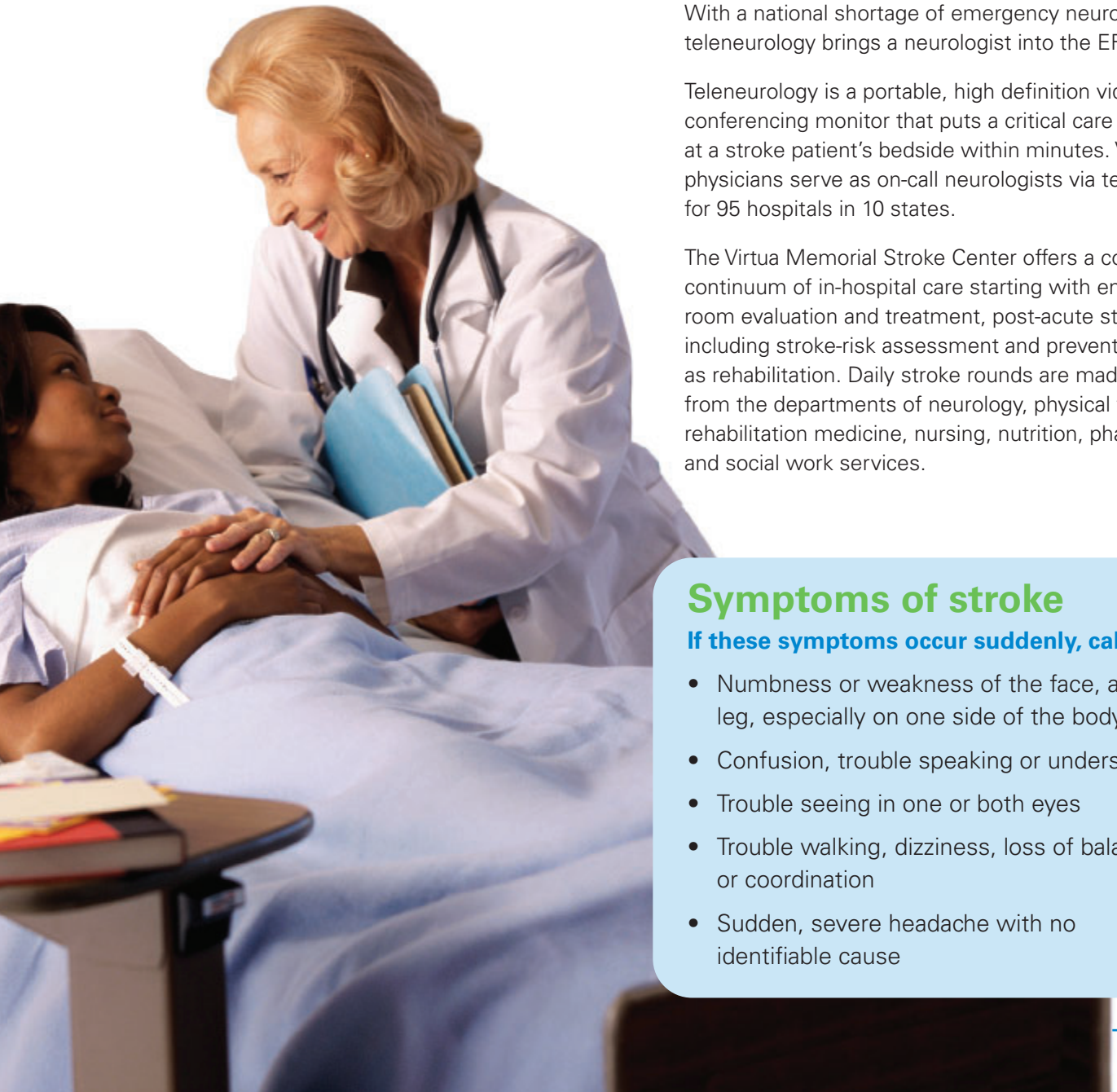
For more information, call 1-888-VIRTUA-3.

Virtua Memorial

Time & technology:
The new world of stroke treatment

We've all heard the saying "time is of the essence," and never has this been more true than when it comes to strokes. Stroke, the leading cause of disability in adults, occurs when the blood flow to the brain is stopped or blocked, or when a blood vessel bursts and bleeds into the brain.

When brain cells do not receive the oxygen and nutrients they need, various brain functions associated with them die. For these reasons, physicians sometimes refer to strokes as "brain attacks."



The crucial hours

When a medication called tPA (tissue plasminogen activator) is given to victims of certain kinds of strokes within four and a half hours, large studies have shown long-term improvement in functional outcomes. The key to the improvement is the four and a half hour window that can "make or break" a stroke victim's recovery and future. This is why getting to an emergency room (ER) that has a comprehensive stroke program, like Virtua Memorial, as quickly as possible is so critical.

Tele … what?

At Virtua Memorial, stroke victims and their families benefit from a sophisticated technology called teleneurology. With a national shortage of emergency neurologists, teleneurology brings a neurologist into the ER 24/7.

Teleneurology is a portable, high definition video-conferencing monitor that puts a critical care neurologist at a stroke patient's bedside within minutes. Virtua physicians serve as on-call neurologists via teleneurology for 95 hospitals in 10 states.

The Virtua Memorial Stroke Center offers a complete continuum of in-hospital care starting with emergency room evaluation and treatment, post-acute stroke care including stroke-risk assessment and prevention as well as rehabilitation. Daily stroke rounds are made by staff from the departments of neurology, physical therapy, rehabilitation medicine, nursing, nutrition, pharmacy and social work services.

Symptoms of stroke

If these symptoms occur suddenly, call 911

- Numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- Trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden, severe headache with no identifiable cause

Taking the unexpected out of expecting

Choosing the right maternity care makes all the difference

Expectant mothers and their families spend nine months focused on the arrival of their baby. While most pregnancies go smoothly, emergencies can occur. For those times, Virtua Memorial provides support every step of the way.

Part of the maternity service at Virtua Memorial is to have the highest level of care available to comprehensively respond to a range of emergencies that can occur either to mother or to child.

Week by week

A fetus is a work in progress until the day he is born. A pregnancy is considered full-term from week 38 on. A pre-term or "premature" labor is one in which the child is born before 37 weeks.

If pre-term labor is suspected, the Virtua Memorial team uses sophisticated ultrasound and other technologies to identify telltale signs of the earliest stages of labor. It is important to recognize these signs of pre-term labor if they occur prior to the ninth month of pregnancy:

- Contractions
- Abdominal cramping
- A low and dull backache
- Pelvic pressure
- A change in vaginal discharge or bleeding

A doctor should be called after experiencing any of these symptoms for more than one hour. Keep in mind that if your maternity-related symptoms require emergency room attention, your choice of hospitals will be all-the-more important for the longer-term care of you and your baby.

All efforts are made to slow or halt the process; depending on the individual situation, doctors may put pregnant patients on bed rest or admit them to the hospital for round-the-clock monitoring. Additionally, women in active labor may be given medications that work to stop the labor's progress or medications to help mature the baby's lungs.

Taking care of our preemies

Despite all best efforts, it may become clear that the baby will in fact be born prematurely. To mimic the growth and progress that were taking place in the womb, a special care nursery at Virtua Memorial gives "preemies" a quiet, warm and calm place to continue on their journey of development. Only a fully established and experienced facility like Virtua Memorial can offer the care and peace of mind that helps counteract what can be a very emotional time for families.

Visit us online at VirtuaBaby.org.

Virtua Memorial

Virtua Fox Chase Cancer Program

Helps cancer patients navigate new territory

Cancer: It is a diagnosis no one seeks, but one that comes with plenty of hope and guidance when the right hospital partner is by your side.

Newly diagnosed cancer patients and their families are almost immediately thrust into an unfamiliar world of medical terms, tests, technologies and appointments. Before treatment can begin, they must make an important choice about where to seek medical care so they can go about the business of living.

Virtua Fox Chase Cancer Program at Virtua Memorial is at the top of the list for everything from technology and medical personnel to personal care and a variety of treatment options including clinical trials.

Navigating the process

"One of the key areas that sets us apart from most other hospital cancer programs," explains Kim Mazzei, assistant vice president of Virtua's oncology program, "is our Nurse Navigation Program."

Immediately upon diagnosis, the physician contacts a nurse navigator so a nurse can be assigned to the patient and expedite diagnostic tests and treatment right away.

"The Virtua nurse navigator is a single link between a patient and all of the tests, appointments, specialists and support mechanisms necessary for comprehensive treatment to take place," Mazzei adds. The assigned nurse navigator guides the patient through everything that comes along during the treatment process and for up to one full year following the last course of treatment.

"The nurse navigator program offers a full support option for patients," she says. "Newly diagnosed patients and their families can be anxious or overwhelmed with treatment decisions. Our role is to support and guide them. We also link them with other support groups and resources whenever possible."

Top partners & technology

Beyond that high level of attention and care, Virtua is affiliated with Fox Chase Cancer Center in Philadelphia, which offers a tertiary level of cancer treatment, as well as research, national clinical study choices and prevention options.

Over half of newly diagnosed cancer patients require some type of radiation therapy treatment. Virtua is proud of its state-of-the-art radiation therapy technologies, offering the best and latest in technology.

Virtua's Cancer Program has twice received an Outstanding Achievement Award from the Commission on Cancer (CoC) and most recently was accredited by the American College of Radiology (a three-year accreditation given to just 10 percent of radiation centers across the U.S.). Virtua's breast care program was only the second New Jersey hospital to receive a three year, full accreditation designation by the National Accreditation Program for Breast Centers (NAPBC), a program administered by the American College of Surgeons. Virtua is also active in the community, especially in the areas of early detection and education of under-served populations providing necessary tests such as mammograms.

For more information or to contact a nurse navigator, please call 1-888-VIRTUA-3.

Caring for your heart …

So it can care for you

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women. While the statistic is alarming, the actual diagnosis is even more frightening when it happens to you or a loved one.

Knowing your heart-healthy numbers and using them to guide exercise, diet and medical care will help you maintain heart health.

Blood pressure: Ideal blood pressure is 120 over 70.

Cholesterol: Your cholesterol includes three numbers: LDL should be 100 or less; HDL should be 40 or more for men and at least 45 to 50 for women; triglycerides should be 150 or less.

Waist size: A man's waist should not exceed 40 inches, and a woman's should not exceed 35 inches, as excessive abdominal fat can increase your risk for heart disease.

A healthy lifestyle is important, but especially for those with heart disease. In some cases when heart disease progresses, hospitalization is necessary to monitor the heart and get symptoms under control.

"We make sure patients are on the right path – from testing to treatment – and we offer comprehensive care that not all hospitals offer," says Val Torres, RN AAS, nurse director of cardiac services at Virtua Memorial.

Virtua's cardiac diagnostic, treatment and emergency care services provide patients with a wide range of noninvasive and invasive cardiac options. In fact, Virtua Memorial recently expanded its cardiac services with state-of-the-art equipment to clear plaque blockages, and breakup or remove blood clots.

"It is our continuum of care and the superior team that delivers this care that make patients want to be at Virtua Memorial," says Virtua cardiologist Charles Dennis, MD.

Heart Disease Facts & Figures

- Heart disease causes approximately one-fourth of all deaths each year in the United States.
- Heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women.
- Coronary heart disease is the most common type of heart disease.
- Every year about 785,000 Americans have a first heart attack.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Go Red for women | American Heart Association Learn and Live

South Jersey Goes Red Sponsor

Virtua Memorial

Free talk

Identify and eliminate your digestive problems

Do digestive problems leave you feeling uncomfortable and irritable? Join us as Monica Awsare, MD, gastroenterologist, and Stephen Pilipshen, MD, colorectal surgeon at Virtua Memorial, discuss the signs and symptoms of gastrointestinal problems, and food that promotes healthy digestion. Space is limited so register today.

Date: **Thursday, September 30, 2010**
Time: 5:30 to 7:30 pm
Place: Virtua Memorial Hospital
175 Madison Avenue, Mt. Holly, NJ
Cost: FREE

Registration: Call 1-888-VIRTUA-3 (1-888-847-8823)

Virtua Memorial

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HealthEssentials is designed to provide information about Virtua Memorial services. It is not meant to replace the advice of a doctor.

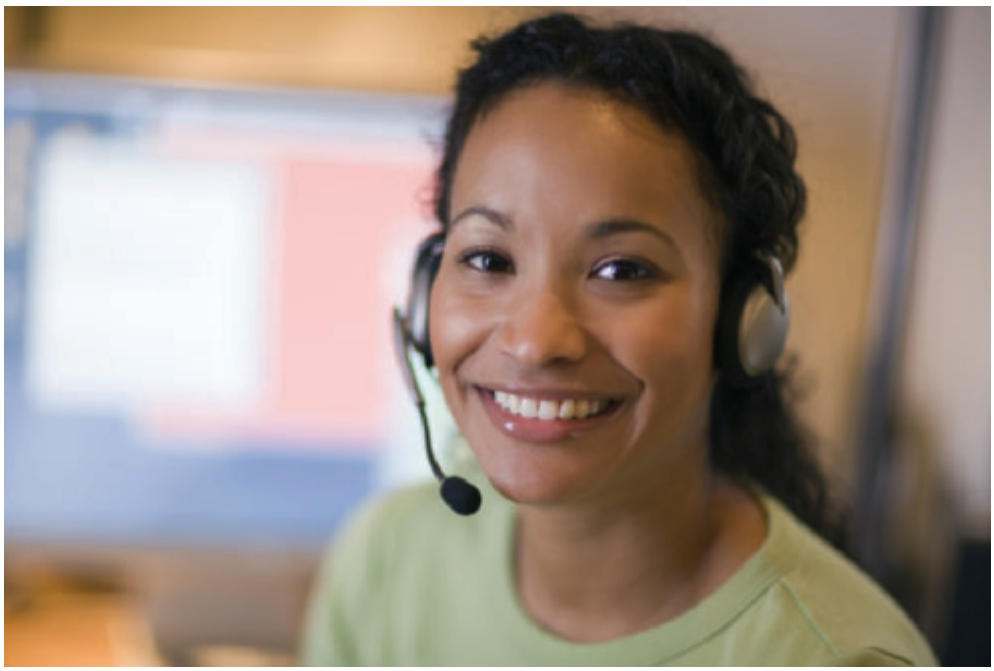
Need help with your health care?

Let a Virtua personal health navigator guide you.

We take the confusion and work out of managing doctor's appointments, scheduling lab tests and finding reliable health resources. Just one phone call to a trained personal health navigator at Virtua's Navigation Access Center is your one stop for personalized and complete healthcare service.

A personal health navigator can help:

- Schedule appointments with primary care doctors and specialists
- Schedule lab and radiology tests
- Guide you through breast cancer treatment with a nurse navigator
- Assist in managing a medical condition
- Create an itinerary of appointments
- Remind you of appointments



And it's all on your terms: Call us at 1-888-VIRTUA-3.
E-mail us at patientnavigation@virtua.org. Give us a convenient time and phone number, and one of our personal health navigators will call you.