

How to Lessen Your Time Waiting in the Hospital Emergency Department.

Mark Balcaen, President and CEO of the Lake of the Woods District Hospital has a few simple suggestions on how to lessen your wait time in the hospital emergency department.

Kenora does not have a walk-in clinic. During evenings, nights, weekends, and statutory holidays the only place in Kenora you can be seen by a physician or nurse is at the hospital. The closest walk-in clinics are in Winnipeg and Thunder Bay and their wait times can be as long as the hospital emergency department.

A common reason for an emergency department visit is to have a prescription filled because the person has run out of medication and does not have a local family doctor or cannot get into see their local family doctor quickly. Many of these types of emergency department visits are avoidable if people would keep track of their prescription amounts and make physician appointments well before their prescriptions run out.

If you do not think your medical problem is serious but you are unsure of what to do first consider:

- Calling Telehealth Ontario which provides free access to a Registered Nurse — 24 Hours a day, 7 days a week toll free 1-866-797-0000.
- Going to a local pharmacy and discussing your health concern with a pharmacist.
- If you can, go on-line and check out some of the health care help lines for advice. The local library has internet access for those who do not have access at their cottage.

If you feel that your medical problem is urgent or serious, and are unable to safely get a ride into the hospital, call 911 if you are within the City of Kenora or 468-3311 if you are located in the McKenzie / Clearwater / Pellatt areas. Depending on your location and condition a land ambulance or air (helicopter) ambulance will be sent to your location. There is a fee for these services.

- If you are coming to the hospital emergency department bring a list of all medications you are currently taking and bring in the medications in their bottles. The medication bottles contain important information concerning the dosage and frequency that will help the emergency department physician in dealing with your concern.
- Bring a family member, friend, or neighbor who can be with you during your time in the emergency.
- Please be courteous when dealing with the emergency department and admitting staff even if you are feeling unwell. They do care about you but are also trying to care for many other patients you may not see.

- Be prepared for a wait for minor or non-emergent medical problems. Emergent or urgent medical problems are addressed as a priority and will take precedence over minor health problems.
- When waiting in the emergency waiting room notify the emergency department nurse if your medical condition becomes worse. Do not leave the emergency department without notifying the staff.
- Make sure to bring in your provincial medical care card (Ontario, Manitoba, etc.) if you are a Canadian citizen. If you are from out-of-country bring in a credit card and photo ID (passport, drivers license, etc.).