

When medical care can't wait ...

What's the average length of stay in a U.S. hospital emergency department?

- A. Less than one hour
- B. Two hours
- C. Four hours

The correct answer: Four hours.

Compare that to the average stay in the emergency department at Aspen Valley Hospital (AVH): less than two hours — including, if needed, services such as laboratory testing, radiology, and physical therapy.

"When you are sick or in pain, every minute matters," says Steve Knowles, RN, BSN, manager of the emergency department. "We are blessed with an extraordinary team of physicians and nurses, as well as the combined resources of the hospital, to keep the average length-of-stay time at about 110 minutes."

How AVH makes a difference

Once a patient arrives in our emergency department, a nurse or paramedic will typically begin triage and registration immediately. Pertinent information about

the patient's condition and medical history will be collected, and radiological or laboratory tests are ordered.

With a board-certified emergency physician always on duty, treatment can begin quickly. The physician may consult with the patient's primary doctor, surgeons, or other specialists. If additional testing or physical therapy is needed, those services are provided on site. For more serious cases, the patient may be admitted to AVH or transferred to another facility. This is a flow that can usually be followed for every patient, even during the busy winter recreation season.

Throughout the process, loved ones may wait in a designated area. (In most cases, a family member may stay with the patient to act as a comfort and advocate.) AVH also has a patient representative to address questions and help loved ones with logistical concerns, such as lodging and transportation needs.



Peg Vidakovich, RN, is one of this patient's caregivers in the emergency department.

Focusing on quality

One reason for the efficiency of AVH's emergency department is that all its physicians are board-certified, and all its nurses have special training in emergency medicine. That means quality of care is never sacrificed for speed.

Another crucial factor is the other departments at the hospital. "We have amazing assistance from the many departments that support us," Steve says. "We could not provide this level of patient care alone. We are proud of everyone who contributes to the emergency department's success."

Safety Rule #1

"Wear safety equipment — especially a helmet — when you're skiing," says Steve Knowles, RN, BSN, manager of the emergency department at Aspen Valley Hospital (AVH). "Unfortunately, we see traumatic head and spine injuries every ski season. A helmet may not prevent every injury, but we've definitely seen situations where helmets saved lives."

AVH promotes sports safety all year long through the Think First project, which distributes free helmets at school and community events.



Average time spent in emergency departments*

National average:
240 minutes

Colorado average:
217 minutes

AVH average:
110 minutes

*Source: Press Ganey Associates, Inc.