

Bay Area hospital prepares for possible surge in Election Night cardiac patients

By [Julian Glover](#)

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SAN JOSE, Calif. (KGO) -- You're scrolling through social media, refreshing websites, and watching the election results roll in on [ABC7 News](#). We get it. The election has so many of us stressed out.

Some of us are so stressed out a South Bay emergency room doctor is preparing for a spike in ER visits over "election stress disorder."

"It doesn't happen right away, but in fact it can be hours and even days after the event -- the earthquake, the final results of the election, etc.," said Paul Silka, M.D., Emergency Department Director, Regional Medical Center. "I think we are in a window where we want to be very vigilant."

Dr. Silka is preparing his staff for a potential influx in emergency room visits following Election Day.

He calls it "election stress disorder" and said there was an uptick in patients with acute cardiovascular issues following the results of the 2016 election.

Think of it as the hangover after the election, but with severe health consequences if you put off getting treatment.

"There's some science behind this that these events cause enough stress that people already at risk to have an acute even," said Silka.

The main concerns are heart attack and stroke.



Paths to victory: How President Donald Trump or Democrat Joe Biden could win the presidential election as of Wednesday morning.

Silka warns to pay close attention to symptoms like chest pain that creeps up to the jaw, shortness of breath, and even intense abdominal pain for a potential heart attack and numbness or weakness for signs of a stroke.

Adding to the concerns are people who may put off seeking treatment out of COVID-19 concerns, although hospitals are general considered safe.

"We are pretty confident we understand how the disease can be prevented," he said.

As we sit and wait for the presidential election results to roll in with no certainty about when we will know the outcome Andrea Zorbas, Psy.D, of Therapy Now SF said many of us are more stressed than usual.

"Anxiety -- that is going to be the biggest thing that people are dealing with the unknown," said Zorbas, "That's happening right now and there's so much that we can't control."



As Election Day approaches, mental health experts are noticing an uptick in clients with high levels of stress.

Dr. Zorbas is encouraging her clients to limit time on social media, get outside, and take care of those basic needs like eating a good meal and exercising.

"Practice mindfulness and be as present as you possibly can. Take deep breaths. What's happening is a lot of us are taking short breaths and it's sending a signal to our brain that we are in crisis mode," said Zorbas.

She added, "sometimes it can help if we take away focusing on the negative and focus a little bit more on the positive."

Hospital spokeswoman Sarah Sherwood compared the stress to that experienced by fans during a Super Bowl or a natural disaster like an earthquake.

"We believe the election is of that magnitude," Sherwood said.