

Hyperbaric Chamber

Offers Emergency and Ongoing Treatments for Area Patients

W

hen a Texas couple set out on an antique buying trip throughout the Midwest last winter, they never dreamed they would end up taking a brief detour to Liberty Hospital's Hyperbaric Chamber.

"We had stopped for the night in a Wal-Mart parking lot," the Texas woman said. "We had a camper on the back of our pick up, and we were pulling a trailer with a generator on it to supply the power for the camper."

Sometime during the night, the wind shifted and carbon monoxide fumes from the generator began seeping into the camper. "I woke up in the middle of the night and felt sick. I thought I had the flu, so I woke my husband up. He was sick too and began having chest pains," she said.

The woman's husband stepped outside the camper and flagged a Wal-Mart employee down, who dialed 911 for the couple. Soon an ambulance was on the way, taking them to Liberty Hospital, the only facility in the Northland to offer emergency hyperbaric treatments for carbon monoxide poisoning.

"We had no idea what was wrong with us, but the ambulance crew recognized that we had carbon monoxide poisoning immediately," she said. "My husband began feeling better as soon as we left the camper, but I was still sick." The woman received one treatment, or "dive" in the hospital's chamber, and a few hours later, they were on their way to the Iowa border.



Elmer Cooley of Independence is pleased with results of his hyperbaric treatments.

In addition to emergency patients, Liberty Hospital's Hyperbaric Services also frequently treats patients who have wounds that have been difficult to heal, like 79-year-old Elmer Cooley of Independence.

"The circulation in my left ankle had gotten very poor this past winter," Cooley said. When placing a metal coil, called a stent, in the veins to prop them open failed to improve his circulation, Cooley's doctor prescribed hyperbaric treatments to promote healing. "I have had 12 treatments, and it has improved my condition," he said.

According to Anthony Johnston, ACHRN, coordinator of Liberty Hospital's Hyperbaric Services, hyperbaric medicine in general is based on research that high-dose oxygen reverses conditions preventing the body from healing itself. The treatments are

approved for many strongly supported medical indications, such as carbon monoxide poisoning and wound healing, by the Undersea and Hyperbaric Medical Society. Medicare and most insurance companies cover the therapy.

Patients receiving treatments lie on an adjustable cot and are sealed inside a clear acrylic chamber. Each hyperbaric therapy treatment lasts approximately two hours. Like Cooley, most patients must take daily treatments to receive the full benefit of the therapy. Treatments stop when the patient's physician believes tissues have returned to normal.

Before a patient can be considered for hyperbaric treatment, he or she must have a referral from a physician and must undergo a thorough evaluation. For more information about Liberty Hospital's Hyperbaric Services, contact Johnston at 816-407-2045.