

When to Go to the Emergency Department

Some conditions that warrant a trip to the emergency department:

- Loss of consciousness
- Signs of heart attack lasting longer than two minutes (may include pressure, squeezing or pain in the center of the chest, and/or chest pain with lightheadedness)
- Signs of a stroke (may include sudden weakness or numbness of the face, arm, or leg on one side of the body; sudden dimness or loss of vision, particularly in one eye; loss of speech, or trouble talking or understanding speech)
- Bleeding that, despite direct pressure for ten minutes, does not stop
- Instantaneous and severe pain
- Significant shortness of breath
- Poisoning (Note: If at all possible, first contact the local poison control center; request immediately applicable advice, since some poisons must be vomited immediately while other poisons must be diluted with water. Acting quickly in this manner can save a life.)
- Allergic reaction to a food, medication, or insect sting, especially if breathing becomes labored
- Serious, traumatic injury (i.e. to the head)
- Unexplained prolonged stupor, drowsiness, or disorientation
- Vomiting or coughing up blood
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Suicidal or homicidal feelings
- Neck stiffness or rash with fever

Some conditions that generally do not warrant a trip to the emergency department:

- Earaches or headaches
- Colds, coughs, sore throat, or flu symptoms
- Chronic condition (i.e. back pain) which has occurred continuously for several months.
- Fever (if in a newborn or if remains high for prolonged period of time, call your doctor or go to the ED)
- Minor cuts in which bleeding has been stopped
- Sprain, sunburn, minor burn
- Insect sting (unless experiencing labored breathing, which requires immediate medical attention)
- Animal bite (call your doctor in the event a rabies shot is needed)