



When to Go to an Urgent Care Clinic

When you have a problem, do not wait too long to get medical care. If your problem is not life threatening or risking disability, but you are concerned and you cannot see your doctor soon enough, go to an urgent care clinic.

The kinds of problems an urgent care clinic can deal with include:

- ⇒ Common illnesses, such as colds, the flu, earaches, sore throats, migraines, low-grade fevers, and limited rashes
- ⇒ Minor injuries, such as sprains, back pain, minor cuts and burns, minor broken bones, or minor eye injuries

If You Are Not Sure, Talk to Someone

If you are not sure what to do, and you don't have one of the serious conditions listed above, call your doctor. If the office is not open, your phone call may be forwarded to someone. Describe your symptoms to the doctor who answers your call, and find out what you should do.

Your doctor or health insurance company may also offer a nurse telephone advice hotline. Call this number and tell the nurse your symptoms for advice on what to do.



Prepare Now

Before you have a medical problem, learn what your choices are. Check the website of your health insurance company.

Put these telephone numbers in the memory of your phone:

- ⇒ Your doctor
- ⇒ The closest emergency department
- ⇒ Nurse telephone advice line
- ⇒ Urgent care clinic
- ⇒ Walk-in clinic

References

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. How to Use the Hospital Emergency Rooms Wisely. Last reviewed August 2008. Available at: www.ahrq.gov/news/columns/navigating_the_health_care_system/081908.html. Accessed October 27, 2014.

FAIR Health. Emergency Care vs. Urgent Care. Available at: fairhealthconsumer.org/reimbursementservice.php?id=19. Accessed October 27, 2014.

Update Date 10/27/2014

Updated by: Laura J. Martin, MD, MPH, ABIM Board Certified in Internal Medicine and Hospice and Palliative Medicine, Atlanta, GA. Also reviewed by David Zieve, MD, MHA, Isla Ogilvie, PhD, and the A.D.A.M. Editorial team.



**Central Virginia Coalition
of Healthcare Providers**

CVCHIP

2 Eaton Street
Suite 908
Hampton VA 23669
www.cvchip.net



When to Use the Emergency Room



**Not knowing can be costly and
time-consuming!**

When to Use the Emergency Room - Adult

Whenever an illness or injury occurs, you need to decide how serious it is and how soon to get medical care. This will help you choose whether it is best to:

- ⇒ Call your doctor
- ⇒ Go to an urgent care clinic
- ⇒ Go to an emergency department right away

It pays to think about the right place to go. Treatment in an emergency department can cost 2 to 3 times more than the same care in your doctor's office. Think about this and the other issues listed below when deciding.

Signs of an Emergency

How quickly do you need care? If a person or unborn baby could die or be permanently disabled, it is an emergency

→ **Call 911 to have the emergency team come to you right away if you cannot wait, such as for:**

- ⇒ Choking
- ⇒ **Stopped** breathing
- ⇒ Head injury with passing out, fainting, or confusion
- ⇒ Injury to neck or spine, especially if there is loss of feeling or inability to move
- ⇒ Electric shock or lightning strike
- ⇒ Severe burn
- ⇒ Severe chest pain or pressure
- ⇒ Seizure that lasted 3 to 5 minutes

→ **Go to an emergency department or call 911 for help for problems such as:**

- ⇒ Trouble breathing
- ⇒ Passing out, fainting
- ⇒ Pain in the arm or jaw
- ⇒ Unusual or bad headache, especially if it started suddenly
- ⇒ Suddenly not able to speak, see, walk, or move

- ⇒ Suddenly weak or drooping on one side of the body
- ⇒ Dizziness or weakness that does not go away
- ⇒ Inhaled smoke or poisonous fumes
- ⇒ Sudden confusion
- ⇒ Heavy bleeding
- ⇒ Possible broken bone, loss of movement, especially if the bone is pushing through the skin
- ⇒ Deep wound
- ⇒ Serious burn
- ⇒ Coughing or throwing up blood
- ⇒ Severe pain anywhere on the body
- ⇒ Severe allergic reaction with trouble breathing, swelling, hives
- ⇒ High fever with headache and stiff neck
- ⇒ High fever that does not get better with medicine
- ⇒ Throwing up or loose stools that does not stop
- ⇒ Poisoning or overdose of drug or alcohol
- ⇒ Suicidal thoughts
- ⇒ Seizures