

When to go to the Emergency Room (and when not to)

"For those medical situations where you are unsure about whether to go to the ER, call your doctor first. Most clinics and doctor's offices are prepared to respond to your call - with physicians on call or after-hours care."

Dr. Howard Epstein, M.D.,
Chief Medical Director, PreferredOne



If you have a life-threatening condition, the emergency room is the place to go. Chest pains, shortness of breath, fainting, severe pain or major injuries are a few examples of when it makes sense to visit the emergency room. Don't wait, call 911 or go to your nearest ER. However, with conditions such as the flu, a sore throat, cuts or sprains the ER is going to cost a lot more – costs that are passed on to you and your employer.

HELPFUL TIPS:

- **Call Your Clinic.** If your clinic is open, a triage nurse can provide the best advice on the level of care you need — scheduling an appointment or recommending urgent care or an emergency room.
- **Urgent Care.** Generally provides after-hours and weekend care for conditions that are not life-threatening and require more immediate attention.
- **Emergency Rooms.** For life-threatening conditions that require immediate emergency care.
- Using the proper care setting can save you time in the waiting room and money in deductibles, coinsurance and copayments.
- Learn symptoms of heart attacks, strokes and other life-threatening conditions.
- After you visit the emergency room always follow their instructions on follow-up care.

COMMON REASONS TO GO TO YOUR CLINIC OR URGENT CARE (examples of non life-threatening conditions)

- Colds, flu, sore throats
- Deep cuts that need stitches
- Minor animal bites
- Allergic reactions that do not affect breathing
- Diarrhea
- Sprains and strains
- Severe ear pain or infection
- Low back pain
- Skin problems or rashes

COMMON REASONS TO GO TO THE EMERGENCY ROOM (examples of life-threatening conditions)

- Difficult breathing or choking, not being able to swallow
- Signs of a heart attack or stroke such as chest pains, numbness or dizziness
- Broken bones or head injuries
- Bleeding excessively
- Persistent severe abdominal pain
- Oral temperature over 105° that does not respond to over-the-counter medications
- Pregnant and suspect a problem
- Change in mental status or feelings of suicide

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EMERGENCY ROOM VISITS