

When Should I Go to the ER?

More than 300,000 Americans on average are treated in our nation's emergency departments every day, according to the latest government statistics, and patients are treated for a wide variety of medical conditions.

But how do you decide when a medical condition rises to the level of a medical

“emergency?” A medical emergency is an event that you reasonably believe threatens your or someone else's life or limb in such a manner that immediate medical care is needed to prevent death or serious impairment of health. A medical emergency includes severe pain, bad injury, a serious illness, or a medical condition that is quickly getting much worse. The American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP) offers a list of warning signs that indicate a medical emergency.

- ▶ Difficulty breathing, shortness of breath
- ▶ Chest or upper abdominal pain or pressure
- ▶ Fainting, sudden dizziness, weakness
- ▶ Changes in vision
- ▶ Confusion or changes in mental status
- ▶ Any sudden or severe pain
- ▶ Uncontrolled bleeding
- ▶ Severe or persistent vomiting or diarrhea
- ▶ Coughing or vomiting blood
- ▶ Suicidal feelings
- ▶ Difficulty speaking
- ▶ Shortness of breath
- ▶ Unusual abdominal pain
- ▶ Severe Burns

What if I'm not sure?

If you're not sure about the answer to the above questions, call 9-1-1 and the trained dispatcher will help advise you. It is better to be safe and let the 9-1-1 call taker determine if you need emergent assistance. Always err on the side of caution. When in doubt, call.



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