

# WHEN SHOULD I TAKE MY CHILD TO THE EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT?

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Whenever your child is sick or injured, you need to decide how serious the problem 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, or go to an emergency department right away.

## Signs of an Emergency

How quickly does your child need care? If your child 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 or turning blue**
- **Possible poisoning (call nearest Poison Control Center)**
- **Head injury with passing out, throwing up, or not behaving normally**
- **Injury to neck or spine**
- **Severe burn**
- **Seizure that lasted 3-5 minutes**
- **Bleeding that can't be stopped**

## Go to an Emergency Department or Call 911 for:

- Trouble breathing
- Passing out, fainting
- Severe allergic reaction with trouble breathing, swelling, hives
- High fever with headache and stiff neck
- High fever that doesn't get better with medicine
- Suddenly hard to wake up, too sleepy, confused
- Suddenly not able to speak, see, walk, or move
- Heavy bleeding
- Deep wound
- Serious burn
- Coughing or throwing up blood
- Possible broke bone, loss of movement, especially if the bone is pushing through the skin
- A body part near an injured bone is numb, tingling, weak, cold, or pale
- Unusual or bad headache or chest pain
- Fast heartbeat that doesn't slow down
- Throwing up or loose stools that do not stop
- Mouth is dry, no tears, no wet diapers in 18 hours, soft spot in skull is sunken (dehydrated)

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## When to Go to an Urgent Care Clinic

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

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

- Common illnesses, such as colds, the flu, earaches, sore throats, minor headaches, low-grade fevers, and limited rashes
- Minor injuries, such as sprains, bruises, 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 your child does not have one of the serious conditions listed above, call your child's doctor. If the office is not open, your phone call will be forwarded to someone. Describe your child's symptoms to the doctor who answers your call, and find out what you should do.

Your child's doctor or health insurance company may also offer a nurse telephone advice hotline. If they do, call this number and tell the nurse your child's symptoms for advice on what to do.

## Prepare Now!

Before your child has 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 child's doctor
- Emergency department your child's doctor recommends
- Poison Control Center
- Nurse telephone advice line
- Urgent Care Clinic
- Walk-in clinic
- Check to see whether or not your medical home practice or clinic near you have walk-in hours, if they do, be sure to write down those times

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