

# Where should I go?

Primary Care

Urgent Care

Emergency Room

Before you find yourself sitting for hours in an emergency room or end up with medical fees that are not covered by your health plan, here are some things you should know before you or a family member need medical care.

## Primary Care Physician

Most often your primary care provider (PCP) should be your first choice for care both because he/she is familiar with your medical history and because a scheduled office visit is the most cost-effective method of care. Your PCP can assist you in making the right choice when it comes to your need for care, ensuring that you receive the right care in the right place at the right cost.

### What if my doctor is not available right away?

If your doctor is not available or if you can't meet with your doctor, you may choose to visit an urgent care center or medical clinic. Normally urgent care facilities are open for extended hours and are available on a first-come, first-serve basis. However, many network doctors have extended their hours to accommodate patients during evenings and weekends. When selecting a PCP, check to see if his or her hours fit your schedule.

## Urgent Care Clinic

While both urgent and emergency care situations are serious, there are important distinctions between the two. There are a few basic guidelines for determining whether your medical condition is an emergency or simply a condition that needs immediate attention.

### If the answer to any of these questions is yes, then you need emergency care:

Are my symptoms severe and/or life threatening?  
Did the symptoms occur suddenly and unexpectedly?  
Is there excessive bleeding, extreme pain, or broken bones?

### What types of conditions may be included under urgent care?

Urgent care conditions include, but are not limited to asthma, bites, stings and allergic reactions, diarrhea, nausea and vomiting, ear and eye infections, flu, colds and viral illnesses, injuries, skin conditions, sprains, strains, and urinary tract infections.

Basically, urgent care is for medical symptoms, pain, or conditions that require immediate medical attention but are not severe or life-threatening and do not require use of a hospital or emergency room. Always contact PCP first, if available.

## Emergency Room

Emergency care is necessary when a person has an unexpected onset of symptoms, a severe medical condition, accident, or illness that could place a person's health in jeopardy if not treated with immediate medical attention.

Severe symptoms or conditions such as chest pain, shortness of breath, or other unexpected, life threatening illness or injury require emergency care. When immediate medical attention is needed, call 911 or go to an emergency room.



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