

# ST. NICHOLAS HOSPITAL HEALTHSOURCE

## When Should You Go to the ER?

A trip to the emergency room can be fraught with more than the anxiety of the underlying illness. Many people wonder, "Should I go to the ER?" or "Is my illness significant enough?" Insurance issues, money worries, and much more can affect a person's decision to seek emergency room assistance. The following suggestions may help make that decision easier.

In a life-threatening emergency, seek immediate attention by either calling 911 or going to the Emergency Department of the nearest hospital. You should always call 911 if you are having symptoms of a heart attack (chest pain or pressure accompanied with sweating and pain in the jaw or arms) or a stroke (weakness on one side of the body and trouble getting your words out).

You should also go to the Emergency Department if you have loss of consciousness; breathing difficulties; suspected poisoning or overdose; severe injuries, such as suspected broken bones, head injuries, suicide attempts; seizures or convulsions; a sudden, severe headache, especially if accompanied by neck pain or a loss of consciousness.

If you are a victim of domestic violence or rape, it is important for you to come to the Emergency Department. You should also come to the Emergency Department in cases such as coughing up blood, vomiting blood or something that looks like coffee grounds, or a change in mental ability, such as not knowing about your surroundings or the people around you.

There are medical situations that are not appropriate for the Emergency Department, including immunizations, school check-ups, colds and sore throats, routine health maintenance visits, follow-up visits for chronic problems such as chronic back pain and medication refills.

If you are unsure whether you should go to the Emergency Department, call your doctor. Your doctor always has someone on-call, days, nights, and weekends. If you cannot reach him/her, go to the Emergency Department to remove the doubt and potential risk of serious complications. Always listen to your body and seek help when and where appropriate.



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