

# Q. When should I go to the emergency room?

## A.

Everyone gets sick now and then. Some illnesses can be taken care of with over the counter medications and bed rest. Others require a visit to the doctor or prescription medicine. But what about those illnesses that can't wait for an appointment with the doctor?

Some illnesses require a trip to the emergency room. When is it time to go to the emergency room? These simple tips will help you make the right decision when you're feeling under the weather.

These symptoms warrant an immediate trip to the ER by ambulance:

- Chest pain
- Pain in the left arm, neck and jaw
- Shortness of breath
- Sudden onset headache that can be described as "the worst headache of your life"
- Weakness on one side of your body or face. Weakness in one arm or leg.
- Slurred speech
- Bleeding from a cut that will not stop with applied pressure.
- Vomiting blood or bright red blood in your bowel movements.

These symptoms require a call to your doctor. If no appointments are available within one day, a trip to the ER is in order.

- Fever of greater than 101.5
- Abdominal pain with vomiting and diarrhea with or without fever.
- Skin rash, especially after starting a new medication.
- Gradual onset headache with or without neck stiffness and fever.
- Cough producing mucous that is clear or colored with or without fever.

These symptoms warrant a call to your doctor.

- Body aches, joint pain, or muscle pain
- Flu-like symptoms that persist or get worse over 2 to 3 days.
- Any known medication side effect (e.g. nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, mild rash, yellowing of the skin or whites of the eyes)
- Any other sign or symptom that is not typical for you.

*Keep in mind that these are only guidelines. When in doubt never hesitate to call your doctor, go to the emergency department or call an ambulance. It's always better to be safe than sorry.*