



CELEBRATING 10 YEARS

## Is It a Medical Emergency, or Not?

When your child is sick or hurt, it can be difficult to tell if an emergency department visit is needed. In making that decision, it is important to stay calm and recognize the difference between a medical emergency ([/English/health-issues/injuries-emergencies/Pages/When-Your-Child-Needs-Emergency-Medical-Services.aspx](#)) and a medical situation where a different type of care may be more appropriate.



### Nonemergency Medical Situations:

As a first step in nonemergency situations, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends calling your pediatrician's office—your child's "medical home"—to discuss your child's needs. For urgent problems that occur after-hours and cannot wait until the clinic is open, you may call Kid's Care (1-888-211-0724) to speak with a pediatric nurse for advice or download and use the Arkansas Children's Hospital Symptom Checker app at: <https://www.archildrens.org/health-and-wellness/arkansas-childrens-hospital-app>

**If you believe an injury or illness is threatening your child's life or may cause permanent harm, go to the emergency room or call 911 immediately. If your child is seriously ill or injured, it is safer for your child to be transported to the emergency department by ambulance.**

### Emergency Medical Situations:

A trip to the emergency room is the best place for treating severe injuries or life-threatening illnesses. As a rule, if your child can walk, talk, interact, and play, chances are whatever she or he has is not an emergency. *See 10 Things for Parents to Know Before Heading to the ER* ([/English/health-issues/injuries-emergencies/Pages/10-Things-for-Parents-to-Know-Before-Heading-to-the-ER.aspx](#)) for more information.

#### *Examples of situations that require emergency medical care:*

- Large lacerations/wounds with bleeding that won't stop*
- Fever of 100.4 degrees F or higher in a child younger than 60 days (2 months) old*
- Fever of 105 degrees F or higher*
- Fever above 104 degrees F that does not improve with fever medicines within 30 minutes, however, if your child is otherwise doing well, consider calling our office or Kid's Care first.*
- Seizure lasting more than 2 minutes in a child with no prior history of a seizure*
- Any of the following conditions after a head injury: decrease in level of alertness, confusion, headache, vomiting, irritability, difficulty walking, loss of consciousness*
- Severe abdominal pain*
- Severe burns*
- Swallowed object with difficulty breathing or swallowing or swallowing a button battery*
- Severe bone fractures*
- Difficulty breathing or bluish tinge to lips, skin, fingertips, or nail beds*
- Vomiting or coughing up blood*
- Severe neck stiffness or rash along with a fever*
- Poisonings*
- Eye pain*
- Croup with difficulty breathing*
- Any venomous bites or stings with spreading local redness and swelling, or evidence of general illness*
- New or worsening psychiatric or behavioral health issue*
- Worsening of most chronic illnesses such as diabetes, asthma, etc.*
- Severe allergic reaction*

## Additional Information & Resources:

[When to Call Emergency Medical Services \(EMS\) \(/English/health-issues/injuries-emergencies/Pages/When-to-Call-Emergency-Medical-Services-EMS.aspx\)](#)

[First Aid Guide for Parents & Caregivers \(/English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/First-Aid-Guide.aspx\)](#)

[Nonemergency Acute Care: When It's Not the Medical Home \(http://dx.doi.org/10.1542/peds.2017-0629\)](http://dx.doi.org/10.1542/peds.2017-0629) (AAP Policy Statement)

[Guidelines for Care of Children in the Emergency Department \(http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/content/abstract/peds.2009-1807v1\)](http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/content/abstract/peds.2009-1807v1) (AAP Policy Statement)

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The information contained on this Web site should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

