

Pediatric Emergencies – What You Should Know

No parent wants to think about the chance of their children experiencing an injury or illness that requires a trip to the hospital emergency department, but it happens every day. Your best bet is to be as prepared as you can be.

The pediatric doctors at NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital have developed this tip sheet to help you prepare for emergencies, learn when you should call 9-1-1 or visit the emergency room, and what you should do on your way there. The Alexandra & Steven Cohen Children's Emergency Department of NewYork-Presbyterian Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital is a Level 1 Pediatric Trauma Center and features the region's highest number of board-certified physicians in emergency medicine and pediatrics. The Pediatric Emergency Department at NewYork-Presbyterian Komansky Children's Hospital — a regional burn center — provides care for critically ill and injured children of all ages.



What You Can Do to Get Organized:

- Place a copy of your child's insurance information and emergency contacts in an easily accessible location, such as on the refrigerator door or in a diaper bag.
- Make sure your child's school has up-to-date emergency contact information.
- If you go out of town, leave an emergency medical authorization form for family members, babysitters, and other caretakers to ensure that your child can receive emergency treatment if needed.

You Should Visit the Emergency Department If Your Child:

- Has an open wound, to evaluate if stitches are needed.
- Has experienced any injury or burn, or is refusing to move a limb or to walk.
- Is running a fever above 102°F to 104°F in older children — call your pediatrician and/or visit the Emergency Department.
- Has a rash associated with a fever.
- Is having trouble breathing, speaking, or swallowing.
- Shows any alteration in mental status or a feeling of sluggishness.
- Is not acting like himself/herself.

For Babies Less Than 3 Months Old:

Call your pediatrician or visit the Emergency Department if:

- Your infant has a fever of 100.4°F or higher. Any fever in infants this young can be dangerous.

- Your child is showing any signs of dehydration, poor feeding, green-colored vomit, or decreased urine output.
- Your baby is demonstrating any change in mental status, sluggishness, or poor sucking ability.

When You Should Call 9-1-1:

- Always call 9-1-1 if you have any doubts about how severe the situation is or if your child:
- Has lost consciousness.
- Is not acting like himself or is very sluggish.
- Is vomiting after falling or hitting her/his head.

When Going to the Emergency Department:

- Your child should not eat or drink anything on the way to the hospital, so as not to interfere with certain medications that may be required for treatment.
- Stay calm. Your child will mirror your actions and emotions. Hysterical behavior in parents often leads to hysterical behavior in children.

Where You Should Go in New York City:

- For extreme emergencies, always go to the nearest hospital, or call 9-1-1.
- Try to go to a hospital with a dedicated pediatric emergency department.
- If your child suffers from a burn of any kind, NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center features a renowned regional burn center.

This information is brief and general. It should not be the only source of your information on this health care topic. It is not to be used or relied on for diagnosis or treatment. It does not take the place of instructions from your doctor. Talk to your health care providers before making a health care decision.

For more information, please contact:

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