

10 ER TIPS

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If an emergency happens in your family, the first few minutes may be crucial. Here's how to prepare for the unexpected.

1. Teach your children how to dial 9-1-1.

Make sure they know your address and how to unlock the front door to let in emergency responders (if you are unable to do so).

2. Organize your family's medical information.

Complete medical history forms on each family member. Take the forms you need when you go to the emergency department.

3. Complete and sign consent-to-treat forms for each child.

This form will allow caregivers to authorize treatment in an emergency when you are away from your child. Provide copies to key caregivers (babysitters, relatives, school nurses).

4. Learn the basics of first aid, and take a CPR course.

Keep a well-stocked first aid kit in your home and car.

5. Learn the warning signs of medical emergencies.

Knowing how to recognize emergencies may avoid dangerous delays in medical care later. Children may display different signs and symptoms from adults when they become sick or injured.

6. Discuss the emergency care resources in your community with your family physician—and where to go and when.

Keep the names and phone numbers of all family physicians in your wallet and posted on your refrigerator, but in a medical emergency, always call 9-1-1 or seek emergency care.

7. If you come to the ER, remain calm.

Your child will look to you to decide how fearful to be. Bring along a favorite toy, blanket or book to help make your child less anxious. Bring your child's medications (in original containers), as well as his or her medical history form.

8. Tell the triage nurse and emergency physician ALL of your or your child's symptoms.

Answer questions completely and honestly.

9. Not all emergencies happen at home—be prepared when you go on vacation.

Whether you're in a foreign country or just some place new, find out where the closest emergency department is. If you're going abroad, consider getting traveler's health insurance in the event of an emergency, because your health insurance may not cover you in other countries.

10. Prepare a family disaster plan.

Disasters come in many forms, such as fires, hurricanes and acts of terrorism. If you develop and rehearse your plan, you will respond more effectively and potentially save lives. Designate a safe meeting place where all family members will meet in the event your home must be evacuated suddenly.

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