WHEN AN EMERGENCY OCCURS

- Take action. Calling 911 is the best thing to do in a life-threatening emergency, even if you cannot speak. 911 operators can identify your location from the call if it is a landline. Do not hang up until instructed to do so by the operator. About 95 percent of Americans live in an area with 911 service, and 96 percent of the country’s geographic area is covered. If your community is not covered, find out the telephone number for the local EMS and post it by your phone. Teach your children how to call for emergency help without assistance. When traveling, check for local EMS numbers.

- Remain calm. You will be better able to provide critical information to emergency responders and physicians, whether for yourself or someone else.

When To Call

Always call EMS if someone needs immediate medical treatment. To make this decision, ask yourself the following questions:

- Is the person’s condition life-threatening?
- Could the person’s condition worsen and become life-threatening on the way to the hospital?
- Does the person require the skills or equipment of paramedics or emergency medical technicians?
- Could the distance or traffic conditions cause a delay in getting the person to the hospital?
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What To Say

When you call for help, speak calmly and clearly. Give your name, address and phone number; give the location of the patient and describe the problem. Do not hang up until the dispatcher tells you to, because he or she may need more information or give you instructions.

While Waiting for Help

Be prepared while you wait for emergency services to arrive. Action can mean anything from applying direct pressure on a wound, performing CPR or splinting an injury. It may also mean keeping the person calm and telling emergency responders what you know of the person’s accident, illness or medical history. Never perform a medical procedure if you’re unsure about how to do it.

- Do not move anyone involved in a car accident, injured by a serious fall or found unconscious unless he or she is in immediate danger of further injury.
- Do not give the person anything to eat or drink.
- If the person is bleeding, apply a clean cloth or sterile bandage. If possible, elevate the injury and apply direct pressure on the wound.
- If the person is not breathing or does not have a pulse, begin rescue breathing or CPR. If you do not know how to, or have concerns about performing mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, the American Heart Association has endorsed “hands-only” CPR. This means “pushing hard and fast in the middle of the victim’s chest with minimal interruptions” at a rate of 100 compressions per minute. The pop song “Stayin’ Alive” by the Bee Gees is approximately 100 beats per minute, which is a helpful way to remember how fast to perform compressions. Continue chest compressions until the ambulance arrives. For more information, visit http://handsonlycpr.org/.
Preventing for a Medical Emergency

Your regular physician can explain the emergency care available in your community and help you and your family prepare for a medical emergency. Other things you can do to prepare for a medical emergency are:

- Keep well-stocked first aid kits at home, at work and in your car.
- Take classes in CPR and first aid.
- Post emergency numbers near the telephone.
- Organize family medical information, including a history of surgeries, hospitalizations and serious illnesses, such as chronic conditions like asthma or diabetes. Have that medical history, along with a list of your regular doctors, readily available to take with you to the emergency department.
- Make lists of medications (and dosages) taken by all family members (including allergies to medications) and keep it available to take with you to the emergency department.
- Add I.C.E. or “In Case of Emergency” contact name and phone numbers to your cell phone.
- Identify and eliminate safety hazards in your home.
- Put safety first in your home and for your family. For a full home safety checklist, visit www.emergencycareforyou.org.

Not all emergencies can be avoided, but taking precautions on the road and at home can go a long way toward preventing many common accidents.

Medical Emergency

What to do when the doctor’s office is closed.

- Think you are having a medical emergency, seek immediate medical care.
- Review this list with your physician. Ask whether there are other warning signs to watch for based on your own medical history. In addition, ask when to call the doctor’s office versus going straight to an emergency department or calling an ambulance. Find out what you should do when the doctor’s office is closed.

Symptoms of Childhood Emergencies

Because children are still growing, their medical problems can differ from those of adults. They also may display different signs and symptoms from adults when they become injured or sick, and their treatments may differ, too.

Emergency Telephone Numbers

*Clip this list and put it close to your telephone!