

## When to use the emergency room or the clinic

By Paul Schoenfelder, CNO, RN

When an illness or injury occurs, you need to decide how serious it is and how soon to get medical care. It pays to think about the right place to go. Treatment in the ER can cost 2-3 times more than the care in your doctor's office. The kinds of problems a clinic can deal with are those that are usually not life threatening; yet are concerning to you including: common illnesses (such as colds, the flu, earaches, migraines, low-grade fevers, and limited rashes, minor injuries, such as sprains, back pain, minor cuts and burns, minor broken bones, or minor eye injuries, also follow-ups, routine check-ups, well exams). If you aren't sure – call your primary provider clinic or local hospital and ask. Sometimes your health insurance company can give you a 24 hr nurse hotline to call.

Call 911 to have the ambulance come to you for such emergencies as: choking, stopped breathing, head injury with passing out, fainting, or confusion, injury to neck or spine, electric shock, severe burn, severe chest pain or pressure, or seizures that lasted 3-5 minutes.

Go to the emergency room or call 911 for help for problems such as: Trouble breathing, passing out/fainting, pain in the arm or jaw, unusual or bad headache, (especially if it started suddenly), suddenly not able to speak, see, walk or move, suddenly weak or drooping on one side of the body, dizziness or weakness that does not go away, inhaled smoke or poisonous fumes, sudden confusion, heavy bleeding, possible broken bone, loss of movement, especially if the bone is pushing through the skin, deep wounds, serious burns, coughing or throwing up blood, severe pain anywhere on the body, severe allergic reaction with trouble breathing, swelling, hives, high fever with headache and stiff neck, high fever that doesn't come down with medicine, throwing up or loose stools that doesn't stop, poisoning or overdose of drug or alcohol, suicidal thoughts, seizures.

If you have any questions or concerns, FCPHD is here to help! Please call 509-775-3333.

*Prior Hospital Happenings available at <http://www.fcphd.org/news.html>*

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