

SINAI HEALTH LINK

is produced by the Public Affairs

Department of Sinai Health System,

California Avenue at 15th Street, Chicago, IL 60608

HEALTH LINK

1-888-AT-SINAI (1-888-287-4624)

KNOW WHEN TO GO TO THE ER

Car accidents. Broken bones. Serious cuts. Fainting.

Sometimes, it's clear that you have to get to an emergency room (ER) fast. But other times, it's hard to know. How do you decide?

"If you are in a lot of pain or bleeding, if you're having problems with a pregnancy, or if your child has a high fever, go to an emergency room," says Leslie Zun, MD, who is in charge of the Emergency Department at Mount Sinai Hospital in Chicago. If you're not sure, don't take chances, he says. Go.

"If you think it's an emergency, it's better to come to the ER to be checked," he says.

Of course, you can call your family doctor and ask what to do. But don't let that slow you down, Dr. Zun says. Just head to the hospital.

For other kinds of medical care, it's better not to use the ER. Your family doctor is the one to see for minor injuries, colds and flu, prescription refills, or if you've been sick a long time. Those aren't emergencies, and a doctor who knows you and your medical history can treat you best. If you don't have a doctor or clinic, call 1-888-AT-SINAI for a doctor near your home or job.

If you have to go to the ER, it helps to know what will happen there.

At Mount Sinai, we will ask for information like your name, address, age and why you came to the ER.

Then a nurse will find out how sick or hurt you are. Because ERs are for emergencies, patients who need care right away are seen first – even if they come in later.

To cut down on waiting time and see patients sooner, Mount Sinai has an urgent-care area called FastTrack. If your problem doesn't need emergency care, you might be sent to FastTrack. That way, you get taken care of faster, and more serious cases get the attention they need in the ER.

Once you've been treated, the emergency doctor will tell you to see your family doctor (unless you need to check into the hospital).

Someone will explain any instructions, make sure you have the medicine or prescriptions you need, and help you make appointments for tests or follow-up care.

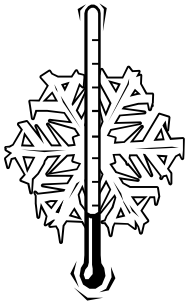


You can help

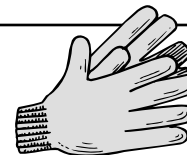
You may panic when someone you love is very sick or badly injured. But if you know what to do, everyone will be calmer and get help faster. Here are some tips:

- Call 911.
- Make sure the person is as comfortable as possible. But don't move them, except to get them out of danger.
- Ask them how they feel.
- Keep them warm.
- Let them know help is on the way.

**LOOKING FOR A DOCTOR IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD?
CALL 1-888-AT-SINAI OR (773) 257-6289 (TTY).**



Watch out for winter hazards



Winter is busy in the ER. Here are some reasons why:

- **Frostbite.** Staying out in the cold without gloves or boots is dangerous. If you can't feel your fingers or toes, you could lose them. Get inside.
- **Hypothermia.** This means your body temperature goes too low. That can kill you.
- **Carbon monoxide poisoning.** A faulty furnace or certain kinds of space heaters can fill your house with dangerous gas. You can't see it or smell it, but it can make you very sick. So use carbon monoxide detectors. The same gas can get you if you're in a closed garage with a car running. People do that to stay warm, but it can be deadly.
- **Burns.** Space heaters get very hot, and can burn kids or adults in an instant. If a curtain or clothing touches the heater – or even gets too close – there could be a fire.
- **Christmas tree fires.** Lights can start a blaze if the tree is too dry. Keep your tree watered, and get rid of it when the holiday is over. Or use an artificial one.
- **Heart attacks.** Shoveling snow can be very dangerous, especially for people who are older or in poor shape.
- **Broken bones.** Slippery sidewalks cause falls. Older people are especially likely to break bones if they fall. Clean off walks and salt them.



Ask your Sinai doctor

Q. My daughter fell off her bike and bumped her head. It started to swell. But I was afraid to take her to the ER because I didn't know if my insurance would pay for it. What should I have done?

A. When someone is badly hurt or very sick, get help right away. Since ERs are open all day, every day, that would have been the best place to take your daughter, because the injury could have been serious.

Most insurance companies pay for most ER visits, though some HMOs require you to call for an OK first. But even if they won't pay, your daughter's health is the most important thing. If you need insurance or other help, Mount Sinai usually can help you get it. But even if we can't, no patient is ever turned away from the ER because he or she can't pay.

Health tip:

Emergencies and trips to the ER are unexpected.

So make a list of medicines you take (name and amount), doctors you see, and medical problems you have and keep it in your wallet. Put any allergies on the list, too. It helps the doctors give you the best, safest and fastest care.

IF YOU NEED A DOCTOR, CALL 1-888-AT-SINAI.