

# When to Use the ER or Urgent Care

When you or a loved one needs medical care right away, is it better to go to an urgent care facility or an emergency room? It depends on the level of care you need.

Choose an urgent care facility for minor illnesses or injuries, such as: A cold or the flu; Earache; Sore throat; Sinus infection; Insect bites or stings; Sprains and strains; Rashes; And minor cuts or wounds.

An urgent care facility is convenient when you can't get in to see your primary healthcare provider. Many are open in the evenings and on weekends. And you don't need an appointment.

At some locations, you may even be able to get vaccines, health screenings, lab tests, and X-rays. Unlike an urgent care facility, an emergency room, or ER, is open all the time. It's the best choice if you or a loved one has a severe illness or injury.

Some examples are: Crushing chest pain; Trouble breathing; Broken bones; Severe stomach pain; Ongoing vomiting or diarrhea; Coughing up or vomiting blood; A lot of bleeding from a wound or injury; And signs of a stroke, like problems speaking or weakness on 1 side of the body.

An ER is also a good place to go if you or a loved one is considering self-harm or wanting to harm others.

For these and other medical emergencies, choose the ER. Or call 911 to get help quickly. Otherwise, you can get care from your healthcare provider or a convenient urgent care facility.