

# How to Be Prepared: Your Family's Emergency Action Guide

## Part 1: BEFORE an Emergency

**Know Your Information (The "Vial of Life")** Paramedics need information fast. Create a single-page document for everyone in your home and keep it on your refrigerator in a plastic bag or envelope. Paramedics are trained to look there.

- **Full Name & Date of Birth**
- **Allergies:** Medications, food, insects, etc.
- **Current Medications:** List the name and dosage (e.g., Lisinopril 20mg).
- **Medical History:** Surgeries, major illnesses (e.g., Diabetes, Heart Attack 2020, Pacemaker).
- **Emergency Contacts:** Name and phone number.
- **Your Doctor's Name:** Primary care physician.

**Know Your Location** Seconds count. Make it easy for EMS to find you, especially at night.

- **House Numbers:** Are your house numbers large (at least 4 inches), reflective, and clearly visible from the street?
- **Know Your Cross-Street:** Be ready to tell the 911 dispatcher your nearest major intersection.

**Know Your Hospital (The Reality Check)** Have a non-emergency conversation with your doctor about your health.

- **Ask Your Doctor:** "If I were having a heart attack, what is the designated Cardiac Center for this area?" "What about a stroke?"
- **Understand the System:** Accept that the hospital you *prefer* for your knee surgery may NOT be the one EMS will take you to in a life-threatening emergency. They must follow protocol.

**Get Basic Training** You are the *first* link in the chain of survival.

- **Learn Hands-Only CPR:** You can learn it online in 5 minutes.
- **Learn "Stop the Bleed":** Know how to use direct pressure and a tourniquet to control severe bleeding.

## Part 2: DURING an Emergency (Calling 911)

**Stay Calm and Speak Clearly.** The dispatcher is your first point of care.

**What to Say (in this order):** The dispatcher will lead the conversation, but be ready with this info.

1. **LOCATION:** "My address is [123 Main Street, Apt 4B]. The nearest cross-street is [Elm Avenue]." Confirm they have it right before giving details.
2. **PROBLEM:** "I need an ambulance. Someone is unconscious." or "My father is having severe chest pain." Be direct.
3. **DETAILS:** Answer their questions.
  - *How old* is the patient?
  - *Is* the patient awake?
  - *Is* the patient breathing? (e.g., "Yes," "No," "They are breathing funny.")
  - *What happened?* (e.g., "He just clutched his chest," "She fell from a ladder.")

**DO NOT HANG UP** Stay on the line until the dispatcher tells you to hang up. They can give you life-saving instructions (like how to do CPR or control bleeding) while help is on the way.

### Get Ready for EMS:

- **Unlock the Door:** Unlock the front door so the crew doesn't have to break it down.
- **Turn on the Lights:** Turn on the porch light and lights inside the house.
- **Secure Pets:** Put any dogs or other pets in a separate, closed room.
- **Get Your Paper:** Have your "Vial of Life" (Part 1) paper ready to hand to the paramedics.