

What to Do When the ER Isn't an Option: Your 5-Minute Plan

When you need immediate care, don't panic. Use this guide to decide what to do next.

Part 1: Assess Your Symptoms (Triage)

CALL 911 IMMEDIATELY if you have ANY of these:

- **Breathing:** Shortness of breath, can't speak in full sentences, gasping.
- **Chest:** Pain, pressure, tightness, or discomfort (feels like squeezing).
- **Neurological:** Sudden weakness or numbness (especially on one side), facial droop, confusion, trouble speaking, sudden severe headache.
- **Bleeding:** Bleeding that won't stop with firm pressure.
- **Consciousness:** Loss of consciousness (fainting), or feeling like you will faint.
- **Trauma:** Severe head injury, obvious broken bone, severe burn.

If your symptoms are NOT on the 911 list, move to Part 2.

Part 2: Choose Your Alternative

Your issue is *urgent*, but not life-threatening. Here are your options.

Option A: Urgent Care Clinic

- **Go here for:** Sprains, potential fractures (needs X-ray), cuts that need stitches, high fever, flu symptoms, painful infections (ear, urinary).
- **Action:** Search "urgent care near me." Call ahead to check wait times and confirm they can treat your issue.

Option B: Telehealth Urgent Care

- **Use this for:** Rashes, cold/flu, pink eye, allergies, mild stomach bugs, prescription refills, or if you just need professional medical advice *fast*.
- **Action:** Open your insurance provider's telehealth app (like Teladoc, Amwell, or your insurer's branded app). Be ready for a video call.

Option C: 24/7 Nurse Hotline

- **Call this if:** You are completely unsure. You can't tell if it's serious or not and need advice.
- **Action:** Call the number on the back of your health insurance card. They will triage your symptoms and tell you whether to go to urgent care, use telehealth, or call 911.

Part 3: Your "Go-List" (If You Go to a Clinic/Hospital)

Grab these items *before* you leave. Put them in a bag.

- Government-Issued ID (Driver's License)
- Health Insurance Card
- A list of ALL your current medications and dosages (or just grab the bottles)
- A list of your allergies (medications and other)
- A list of your major medical conditions/past surgeries
- Your Primary Care Doctor's name and phone number
- Your phone and a wall charger

Part 4: My Key Information (Fill This Out NOW)

Keep this on your fridge or in your wallet.

My Primary Doctor: (Name) (Phone)

My Insurance Nurse Hotline: (Phone Number - *find this on your insurance card*)

Preferred Telehealth App: (Name of App)

Closest In-Network Urgent Care: (Name) (Address) (Phone)

My Allergies:

My Key Medications: