

# Primary Care vs. Urgent Care vs. Emergency Room

Learn the difference to know the right place to go when you need care

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Understanding when to visit your primary care provider, an urgent care clinic, or the emergency room will help you make the best decision when faced with an illness or injury.

## Primary Care Provider

Your primary care provider (PCP) helps you stay on top of routine check-ups, manage long-term conditions, and can treat non-urgent issues. Call and schedule an appointment with your PCP for:

- Annual physicals or routine checkups
- Non-emergency chronic condition management (diabetes, high blood pressure, etc.)
- Allergies
- Medication refill and medicine checks
- Ongoing symptoms (continued back pain, skin problems, etc.)
- Vaccinations

## Urgent Care Clinic

Urgent care is best for issues that are not serious enough to go to the ER but still need quicker attention than a PCP might. Open late and on weekends, they are the best place to go for:

- Cold symptoms (headache, cough, congestion, etc.)
- Flu symptoms
- Ongoing vomiting
- Ear infection
- Animal/insect bites
- Sunburn
- Minor strains, sprains, or fractures
- Minor burns

## Emergency Room

Open 24/7 and equipped with specialized staff and equipment, go to the ER for serious, life-threatening situations, such as:

- Chest pains or other symptoms of heart attack or stroke
- Seizure
- Severe abdominal pain
- Head injury or pain, including loss of consciousness
- Poisoning
- Choking or difficulty breathing
- Severe cuts, burns, or uncontrollable bleeding
- Fever in elderly individuals or young children
- Broken bones or open fractures
- Pregnancy-related medical conditions

*If you or a loved one are experiencing any of these symptoms and cannot get to the nearest ER, call 9-1-1.*

## Cost Considerations

Primary Care is often the most affordable choice for non-urgent needs. Urgent care centers are a step up in cost but are still generally affordable for when your primary doctor isn't available. Emergency rooms are the most expensive option and are best reserved for life-threatening conditions or severe injuries.

To make the most cost-effective choice, consider the severity of your symptoms and whether you could wait to see your PCP or visit Urgent Care instead of heading to the ER.

**If you have any questions about care sites near you, please visit [members.healthgram.com](https://members.healthgram.com) to chat with a Healthgram representative or give us a call at 980-201-3020.**