

# Primary Care vs. Urgent Care vs. Emergency Room

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

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.**