

IS IT AN EMERGENCY?

AT ST. MARY'S WE TREAT PEOPLE. NOT NUMBERS.

Sometimes it can be confusing to know when you should head to the Emergency Room. Tin Do, MD, an emergency physician, and the other staff of St. Mary's ER tell patients who call: "If you believe it to be an emergency and don't think it can wait to see your doctor, you should come in. You know your body best and only you know when your body feels strange."

According to the American College of Emergency Physicians, there are specific health conditions that are considered life threatening and others that require seeking immediate medical attention. If you or someone you know have an emergency, come to the ER. If it is a life threatening emergency or if you think the condition will worsen on the way to the hospital, always call "911."

Below are guidelines of conditions that warrant visiting the ER.

LIFE THREATENING emergencies include:

- Heart attack (chest pain/chest pressure with or without neck or arm pain)
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Bleeding which does not stop after applying pressure
- Loss of consciousness
- Unexplained stupor, drowsiness or disorientation
- Significant trauma (to the head, stomach, chest)
- Stroke (sudden weakness/numbness of the face, arm or leg; sudden vision loss or inability to speak)
- Allergic reactions (when breathing becomes labored or feeling like your throat is swollen)

Other times when you SHOULD come to the ER:

- Broken bones
- Persistent unexplained fever even with Tylenol use
- Persistent or severe vomiting
- Vomiting or coughing blood
- Poisoning (if possible first contact local poison control)
- Severe burns
- Suicidal or homicidal feelings
- Unusual or persistent abdominal pain
- Animal bites (may require rabies or tetanus shot)

Instances when you should call your doctor (Primary Care Physician):

- Cough/cold
- Earaches
- Fever/Flu
- Minor burns (including sunburns)
- Minor cuts (bleeding has stopped)
- Sore throat (but without difficulty breathing or swallowing)
- Sprains
- STD

Note: The above conditions generally do not require an ER visit, but if any of these conditions are severe and/or persistent and you cannot reach your physician, please do visit an ER.



Dr. Tin Do
Medical Director
St. Mary's Emergency Department

Why You Should Get a Primary Care Doctor

In instances when a health condition is non life-threatening it is best to call your primary care physician (PCP). PCPs can typically advise you and recommend treatment over the phone based on your symptoms. Everyone should establish care with a PCP and see them regularly. This physician relationship will enable one doctor to be your health advocate and he/she will become familiar with your medical history, medications and treatments. Another added benefit of having a PCP is that they are generally available 24 hours a day or have colleagues on call to answer your questions anytime.

If you need a primary care doctor, call our referral line at

(415) 750-5599 or go to

docin48hours.org

We'll get you in, get you better, and get you going again.