

*These lists of suggestions provided in this article are not all-inclusive. Always trust your own instincts as no one knows your child like you do. If you are ever concerned for any reason, seek medical treatment.*

# ER 101

## Expectations for Parents Taking their Child to the Emergency Room

### WHEN YOUR CHILD IS HURT OR SICK YOUR FIRST

instinct may be to call their pediatrician, injury and illness don't always happen at "convenient" times. So if your regular doctor is not available, you may be asking yourself, 'what should I do now?'

Below are some specific symptoms that indicate your child needs to see their doctor or visit the ER. Please note this list is not intended to be an all-inclusive list.

- Acute respiratory distress. As children have smaller airways that are more apt to narrowing for various reasons, any time a child is having trouble breathing or an airway is blocked is a reason to visit the emergency room. Some signs of respiratory distress are coughing, wheezing, rapid breathing, labored breathing (especially flaring of the nose and use of chest and neck muscles to aid breathing), grunting, or turning blue. Causes could include choking, allergies, asthma or an infection.
- Loss of sensation or movement, most commonly in an injured limb.
- Persistent nausea or vomiting, due to illness, injury or food poisoning.
- General worsening of symptoms. If a child is generally ill or injured and symptoms persistently get worse, it is always a good idea to consult with the child's primary care provider. If they are unavailable, an Emergency visit could be indicated.



- Head injury with the possibility of a concussion. As a rule of thumb, keep your child still and lying on the ground as you wait for Emergency Medical Services Personnel to arrive and transport your child safely. Once your child becomes more alert, it's important to keep them awake and talking.
- A musculoskeletal injury. Practice the "RICE" therapy (Rest, Ice, Compression, and Elevation) if not contraindicated. Upon intake and triage by a registered nurse be prepared to provide the following information, which can greatly help the process:
  - An accurate list of medications. This is always important when visiting an emergency room and your pharmacy can often print a list off for parents to keep on hand.
  - Know your child's allergies and medical history.

- Provide an accurate account of events that took place previous to the symptoms or injury. This is particularly helpful if your child is not able to reflect on the situation.

When bringing in infants and toddlers, keep in mind potentially relevant details that may pertain to gastrointestinal issues or urinary tract issues. A helpful approach is to use your senses:

- Pay attention to the sound of a cough.
- Is there any sputum or phlegm coming up?
- If you have a child still in diapers, does their urine have a peculiar smell?
- Keep in mind the number and appearance of wet/soiled diapers in the last 24 hours.

These are helpful details for a doctor to know as they diagnose an illness.