

# DECIDING TO GO TO THE EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT

It's not always easy to decide if your child really needs to go to the Emergency Department (ED). We understand that you are worried when your child is sick or injured and may decide to come to the ED. Many visits to the ED are due to minor illnesses that can be easily managed in a doctor's office or clinic. Family doctors know their patients best, and have the skill and resources to manage most problems. Talk to your family doctor first.

## Does my child or youth need emergency care?

As a parent or guardian, you know your child best. Here are some examples to help you decide if your child is in need of emergency care:

### Emergency

**Fever:** less than three months old, immune system problems or complex chronic health problems; very sleepy or difficult to wake.

### Not an emergency

**Fever:** healthy and vaccinated babies and children who appear generally well and playful when the fever is down with ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®) or acetaminophen (Tylenol®, Tempra®).

### Emergency

**Breathing problems:** respiratory distress (working hard to breathe, breathing faster than normal), pale skin, whiteish or blue lips, asthma or wheezing not responding to usual puffers or chest pain.

### Not an emergency

**Breathing problems:** nasal congestion and cough (even if it interrupts sleep), symptoms of the 'common cold', mild asthma or wheezing that responds to usual puffers.

## **Emergency**

**Vomiting or diarrhea:** less than three months old, repeated vomiting and unable to keep liquids down (any age, if it lasts 8 hours or more), vomiting or diarrhea containing large amounts of blood, dehydration with dry mouth or no urine more than 8 hours.

## **Not an emergency**

**Vomiting or diarrhea:** vomiting or diarrhea less than 3-4 times a day; ongoing diarrhea after 'stomach flu' (this can last for up to two weeks).

## **Emergency**

**Injuries:** head injury with loss of consciousness (passing out) or confusion or repeated vomiting, cuts that may need stitches burns that blister and are larger than a Loonie, injury to arm or leg causing large swelling or inability to use the limb, eye injuries or injury causing chest or stomach pain.

## **Not an emergency**

**Injuries:** minor head injuries (with no loss of consciousness, no confusion and no vomiting), scrapes and bruises where the injured part can still be used and sunburns.

**Rashes:** recurring rashes or skin problems; rashes with cough and cold symptoms if the child looks well, mild hives that respond to antihistamines (Reactine®) without difficulty breathing or throat/tongue swelling.

## **Alternatives to the Emergency Department:**

1. Call your family doctor or pediatrician. Even if the office is closed, listen to the voice message for instructions and details about accessing care outside of office hours. Our office has same-day and next day hours during the daytime and the evenings.

2. Visit an Urgent Care clinic:

### **Pelham Urgent Care Clinic**

245 Pelham Road, Suite 202, St. Catharines, Ont. 905-988-1933 Hours: Mon-Thurs 8:00am-8:00pm; Fri 8:00am-4:00pm and Sat-Sun 9:00am-3:00pm

### **St. Joseph's Urgent Care Clinic**

2757 King St. E., Hamilton, Ont. 905-573-7777 Hours: 8:00am-10:00pm 7 days a week.