

Emergency Department Use A Fact Sheet for Media

Emergency Departments are primarily for emergencies:

- If an individual feels they are experiencing an emergency medical condition, they should call 9-1-1 or go directly to an emergency department. Emergency medical conditions include but are not limited to chest pain, strokes, traumatic injury, poisoning, diabetic reactions, seizures, and more.
- Individuals who are not experiencing an emergency medical condition have other options including urgent care clinics, their private physicians or by calling advice lines.
- Individuals arriving at an emergency department with a suspected emergency medical condition will receive care first.
- Wait times for individuals with nonemergency illnesses and injuries can be long.

Emergency Departments follow agreed-upon community procedures and comply with various state and federal laws:

- EMS (ambulance) providers work closely with Emergency Departments in their efforts to deliver high quality and timely pre-hospital care and transportation.
- The privacy of patient information is always protected (HIPAA).
- The federal Emergency 'Medical Treatment and Active Labor Act' (EMTALA) regulates emergency care and assures that no one with an emergency medical condition is ever refused care even if they are unable to pay.
- Hospital emergency departments may temporarily 'close' their facilities to EMS ambulances when they are over-capacity. This is necessary to assure high quality care. Emergency departments are never closed to walk-in's. Emergency departments never turn away ambulances or walk-in patients.
- Emergency departments are staffed by Emergency Physicians and Emergency Nurses who are supported by an array of ancillary services.