

Recognizing Medical Emergencies



A medical emergency is a sudden illness or injury that needs care right away. This happens when a person's health problem may cause him or her to die or lose a limb like a finger, arm, leg, or something else. If they do not get help, they could have very bad problems or die.

The following are examples of medical emergencies:

- Chest pain or pressure with sweating and shortness of breath
- Loss of consciousness, fainting
- Difficulty breathing
- A person may have eaten something poisonous or had too much medicine
- Bleeding that does not stop
- Bad injuries from a fall or accident
- Rape (sexual assault)
- Being beaten by someone
- When someone tries to kill him or herself, a suicide
- The start of seizures or convulsions or ones that do not stop
- A sudden asthma attack that does not stop
- Sudden numbness of or not being able to move (paralysis) an arm, leg, or one side of the body
- Loss of vision, not being able to see
- A sudden very bad headache, especially with neck pain or change in consciousness

- A change in mental ability, such as not knowing where you are or who your friends, family, or coworkers are
- When a woman starts to have a baby too soon

In any of these situations, you can get medical help from the emergency medical system. In most places you can reach the emergency medical system by calling 911 from any phone. Stay calm, speak slowly and clearly, and explain your problem to the emergency person who answers the phone.



That person, the emergency operator, will send an ambulance, fire truck, or a special group of people trained for emergencies. As soon as the people arrive they will begin helping the sick or hurt person and will keep helping this person all the way to the hospital.

Text- Adapted from the Health Guide For Refugees In Minnesota by the Minnesota Department of Health, Refugee Health Program
www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/refugee

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