



# DECIDING TO COME TO THE EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT

## DOES MY CHILD OR YOUTH NEED EMERGENCY CARE?

As a parent or guardian, you know your child best. WNGH's Emergency Department is always here for you. 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.

**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.

**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 amount of blood, dehydration with dry mouth or no urine more than 8 hours.

**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.

**Rashes:** rash with fever that looks like tiny or expanding bruises.



### 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®).

**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.

**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).

**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 sun burns.

**Rashes:** recurring rashes or skin problems; rashes with cough and cold symptoms if the child looks well, mild hives that respond to antihistamines (Reactine®)

## Alternatives to the ED:

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. Many family doctors have same-day, next day or walk-in hours during evenings and weekends. They may also offer 24/7 telephone advice to help you manage until they can see you.
2. Visit a walk-in clinic. In Ontario, call 211 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week) for information about walk-in clinics close to you. Many will accept Québec patients.

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