

# EMERGENCY ROOM OR URGENT CARE?



If you're faced with a sudden illness or injury, making an informed choice on where to seek **medical care** is crucial to your personal and financial well-being. Making the wrong choice can result in delayed medical attention and may cost hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars. In fact, Harvard University reported that 62 percent of personal bankruptcies are caused by medical expenses, making medical debt the leading cause of bankruptcy in America.

If you suddenly fall ill or become injured, how can you determine which facility is most appropriate for your condition?



**Emergency Room**



**Urgent Care**

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The **emergency room (ER)** is equipped to handle life-threatening injuries and illnesses and other serious medical conditions. Patients are seen according to the seriousness of their conditions in relation to the other patients.

**You should go to the nearest ER if you experience any of the following:**

- Compound fractures
- Deep knife or gunshot wounds
- Moderate to severe burns
- Poisoning or suspected poisoning
- Seizures or loss of consciousness
- Serious head, neck or back injuries
- Severe abdominal pain
- Severe chest pain or difficulty breathing
- Signs of a heart attack or stroke
- Suicidal or homicidal feelings
- Uncontrollable bleeding

**Urgent care centers are not** equipped to handle life-threatening injuries, illnesses or medical conditions. These centers are designed to address conditions where delaying treatment could cause serious problems or discomfort.

**Some example of conditions that require a visit to an urgent care center include:**

- Controlled bleeding or cuts that require stitches
- Diagnostic services (X-rays, lab tests)
- Ear infections
- High fever or the flu
- Minor broken bones (e.g., toes, fingers)
- Severe sore throat or cough
- Sprains or strains
- Skin rashes and infections
- Urinary tract infections
- Vomiting, diarrhea or dehydration

Choosing the appropriate place of care will not only ensure prompt and adequate medical attention, but will also help reduce any unnecessary expenses. Although urgent care centers are usually more cost-effective, they are **not** a substitute for emergency care.

