

At the READY

Learn How to Identify and Handle Medical Emergencies Before They Happen ●●●



For many severe medical emergencies such as stroke, sepsis, and heart attacks, knowing the symptoms and how to respond to them quickly can mean the difference between life and death, or living with lasting complications.

Arm Yourself with Information

First, learn the signs for stroke, sepsis, and heart attack so you can have a solid foundation of knowledge for some of the most severe kinds of medical emergencies (*see sidebar below*).

Next, customize this knowledge for your family’s individual situation. Every family is different – assess what medical emergencies your family has

experienced before or has risk factors for. Consider pre-existing conditions and the ages of your family members. Learn the symptoms of complications of these conditions and when to seek care based on your doctor’s recommendations.

Especially for families with children, learn the signs of croup and other respiratory issues such as Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) so you can be informed of the sounds and signs before they occur instead of Googling in the middle of a potential crisis. Sometimes, croup can be treated at home with steam rather than going to the emergency department, but respiratory distress from RSV is different.

The next step should be to create a wellness learning routine for your family. Every six months, or when you change the clocks, make a commitment to refresh your understanding of key

STROKE	HEART ATTACK	SEPSIS
<p><i>Learn the acronym for stroke symptoms and action:</i></p> <p>BE FAST:</p> <p>B Balance: Sudden loss of balance, dizziness</p> <p>E Eyes: Sudden loss of vision or blurred vision</p> <p>F Face: Uneven smile, one side of face is drooping or numb</p> <p>A Arm: One arm is weak or numb</p> <p>S Speech: Slurred speech or difficulty speaking</p> <p>T Time: Time to call 911</p> <p>Stroke is the fifth leading cause of disability in the United States and can happen at any time regardless of age. For each minute that passes during an untreated stroke, 1.9 million brain cells die according to stroke.org.</p>	<p><i>General symptoms for heart attacks include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chest pain or discomfort • Pain or discomfort in the jaw, neck, or both • Pain or discomfort in the arms or shoulders • Shortness of breath • Feeling very tired, lightheaded, or faint • Nausea or vomiting <p><i>Symptoms for women can be different, including:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anxiety • Shortness of breath • Nausea • Vomiting • Upset stomach • Pain in the shoulder, back or arm • Unusual tiredness and weakness 	<p>Sepsis is a life-threatening response to an infection in the body where the immune system fights the body rather than the infection itself. A common misconception is that it can only happen in the hospital, but according to sepsis.org, 80% of sepsis cases start in the community.</p> <p><i>The acronym to learn the symptoms of sepsis is:</i></p> <p>TIME:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temperature higher or lower than normal • Infection signs • Mental status change such as confusion • Extreme pain or illness

Learning the Signs: Learning the signs of severe medical issues can ensure quick, lifesaving response and avoidance of additional complications.

awareness and prevention techniques using online resources and assess what skills could be valuable to your family. This can include refreshing knowledge on CPR, first aid, sepsis signs, assisting a choking person, and how to identify signs of a heart attack. In some cases, watching video tutorials can be helpful. This wellness routine could also mean scheduling a CPR course or checking when your CPR certification should be updated and scheduling a refresher course. To see what classes/courses are available, go to <https://www.calverthealthmedicine.org/Classes-Events>.

Preparing for Action

Think about the things you will need in your home and the information emergency personnel will need in case of an emergency. Consider the other people who may care for loved ones in your home and ensure caregivers have access to crucial information they may need to provide to 911 dispatchers and emergency medical services in case of emergency such as medications and dosage, primary care doctor, and known conditions and allergies.

Along with the personal emergency medical information, consider posting the phone numbers and addresses of the

primary care, urgent care, and emergency providers your family uses and familiarize yourself with what conditions are recommended for each (*see sidebar below: Right care. Right time. Right place.*)

Then, work to ensure your home and vehicle have the supplies needed. In addition to any personal medications, the Red Cross suggests the following in a home first aid kit: 2 absorbent compress dressings (5 x 9 inches), 25 adhesive bandages (assorted sizes), 1 adhesive cloth tape (10 yards x 1 inch), 5 antibiotic ointment packets (approximately 1 gram), 5 antiseptic wipe packets, 2 packets of aspirin (81 mg each), 1 emergency blanket, 1 breathing barrier (with one-way valve), 1 instant cold compress, 2 pairs of nonlatex gloves (size: large), 2 hydrocortisone ointment packets (approximately 1 gram each), 1 3-inch gauze roll (roller) bandage, 1 roller bandage (4 inches wide), 5 3-inch x 3 inch sterile gauze pads, 5 sterile gauze pads (4 x 4 inches), Oral thermometer (non-mercury/non-glass), 2 triangular bandages, tweezers, and emergency first aid instructions.

The Red Cross also suggests making first aid kits for other specific activities as needed such as boating, camping, and hiking.

RIGHT CARE. RIGHT TIME. RIGHT PLACE.

Choosing the appropriate care setting so your care won't be delayed is important when dealing with medical emergencies and complications. The CalvertHealth Emergency Department will see every patient who turns to us for care, but patients are prioritized according to their condition. Remember, if you are experiencing a true emergency, you should always call 911 as Emergency Medical Services can begin providing care while en route. If there is a true emergency, call 911 before administering care to the affected person.

For severe injuries and life-threatening issues call 911.



PRIMARY CARE

Call or see your provider for your regular medical problems or most urgent needs.

- Check-ups or physicals
- Common illnesses
- Fever or flu-like symptoms (If younger than 1 year or having difficulty breathing, go to the ER)
- Cough, cold, sore throat or earache
- Health advice
- Strains and sprains
- Medication refills or changes
- Muscular/joint pain
- Burning with urination
- Ear or sinus pain
- Routine tests
- Flu shots and other vaccines



URGENT CARE

Go to the Urgent Care for common things that need to be treated soon, but your primary care provider is not available.

- Allergic reaction without lips or throat swelling
- Animal or insect bite
- Back pain
- Deep cuts or those requiring stitches
- Minor burns or rashes
- Dental pain
- Minor work-related injury
- Possible fractures
- Eye infections or irritation
- Strains or sprains
- Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea
- Burning with urination
- Ear aches or sinus pain



EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT

Go to the Emergency Department for serious life-or-limb threatening conditions.

- Chest or abdominal pain
- Allergic reaction
- Severe animal or insect bite
- Asthma attack
- Burns (severe or multiple areas)
- Difficulty breathing or speaking
- Broken bones protruding from skin
- Stroke or one-sided weakness
- Severe bleeding or coughing up blood
- Head injury or other major trauma
- Persistent vomiting or diarrhea; dehydration
- Poisoning or overdose
- Seizures
- Loss of consciousness
- Suicidal feelings