



HEALTH TIPS

Consejos de Salud

Where Can I Get Health Care?

There are many different places where you can get health care. Each one provides different types of services. It is important that you know the type of health care you need so you can go to the place where you can get the best care.

For example, you may want to visit a doctor to check up on your health in general or to treat your allergy symptoms. Or maybe you have a health problem that needs to be checked often, like high blood pressure or heart disease. In these cases you need what is called primary health care.

On the other hand, if you are having the symptoms of a heart attack, then you know your life is in danger and you need medical care right away. Or maybe you cut your forehead and need stitches. In these cases you need what is called emergency or urgent health care.

Let's learn more about each of these places and the services they offer:

TO GET PRIMARY HEALTH CARE

Health Centers and Clinics

- Provide primary care, like regular checkups and tests, diagnosing and treating health problems, or managing diseases like diabetes.
- They have family doctors, internists, pediatricians, nurse practitioners and other health professionals.
- May also offer other services such as pharmacy, and dental and mental health care
- May be open some evenings and weekend hours.
- Usually need to make an appointment, but many take walk-ins.
- May include school-based clinics and mobile clinics that go to areas where patients do not have transportation.



Doctors' Offices

- Some doctors' offices provide primary health care too. They have family doctors, internists, pediatricians, nurse practitioners, and other health professionals.
- Other doctors' offices have specialist doctors that treat people with more serious health problems like cancer or heart disease.
- Usually work during office hours.
- Usually need to make an appointment.



Retail Health Clinics

- Offer quick care for common illnesses like colds, flu, insect bites, rashes and allergies.
- Offer vaccinations.
- Located inside pharmacies like CVS, or in stores like Walmart.
- They don't make appointments.



TO GET EMERGENCY CARE

Hospital Emergency Rooms

- Take care of very serious injuries or health problems.
- They are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- They don't make appointments and the wait can be very long (how long depends on your problem).
- Patients may stay there overnight or for a longer period of time if needed.



Urgent Care Centers

- Provide care for illnesses or injuries that are not too serious, but cannot wait until the next day to see a doctor, such as broken bones, cuts, sprains, burns, and allergic reactions.
- Many (not all) are open after regular office hours, evenings and weekends.
- They don't make appointments (you have to wait your turn in line).



To find health care providers in your community:

Call 211 to hear information about local health resources, health insurance programs, maternal health resources, counseling, support groups, medical information lines and other resources in your community.





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Let's Talk about Primary Care

Maria: Hi everyone! My name is Maria. I am a promotora de salud from La Villa Health Center. I am here to talk to you about primary care and why it is important.

Alberto: What is primary care?

Maria: Primary care is the general care you get when you go to a doctor or other health care provider to check on your health and to take care of your basic health care needs. Primary care includes some services that you are familiar with:



Diagnosis: When you are not feeling well and the doctor checks your medical history, signs and symptoms to tell you what your health problem is (may also include services such as laboratory tests and X-rays).

Treatment: Includes the use of medicines, medical equipment or special procedures to cure or improve your health problem.



But primary care also includes other things, like:

Prevention: This includes vaccinations, regular checkups, and screening tests to find out if you have a disease or health condition, like diabetes, cancer, or high cholesterol.

Health education: This is so you can learn about the lifestyles and daily activities that can keep you healthy.

Social services: This may include counseling and guidance to you and your family in finding and using community resources.

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Pedro: I only go to the doctor when I'm feeling sick so I can get some medicine...is this bad?

Maria: You will be taking better care of your health if you go to a doctor regularly, even if you don't think anything is wrong. You should try to go to the doctor at least once every year to get a general checkup, get vaccinated if you need to, and get treatment for any health problems you may have.

Going to your primary care doctor regularly is good because:

- You and your doctor will get to know each other over time. Your doctor will learn what you need and you will learn to trust your doctor.
- Since your doctor is checking you often, he can tell you about your chances of getting sick and can help you before you get sick.
- If you do get sick, he will follow-up and can more easily help you manage your illness or health problem. He will know which medicines or treatment will work better for you.
- If you need to get specialized care, he will help you find a specialist doctor and follow up with you and your specialist doctor.
- Because you know and trust your doctor, you are more likely to follow your treatment and get better more quickly.



Don't wait until you get sick to visit a doctor! Our health center has doctors offering primary care. Make an appointment today! By doing this you take control of your health and your quality of life.



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Should I go to the Hospital Emergency Room?

There are many people going to hospital emergency rooms to get care for conditions or illnesses that are not really emergencies. Getting care at an emergency room is very expensive and the wait is very long. It is important that you go to the emergency room **ONLY** when you really need it. By doing this, you save a lot of time and money for yourself. You also help the hospital be available to people who really need emergency care.



How do I know if I should go to the hospital emergency room?

You should go to the emergency room only if you are having a *true medical emergency*. A true emergency can be anything that puts your life in danger.

What are the symptoms of a true emergency?

- ✓ Fainting
- ✓ Having signs of a heart attack, such as:
 - you feel pressure or pain in the center of your chest
 - you feel pain in both arms, the back, jaw or stomach
- ✓ Having signs of a stroke, such as:
 - suddenly your face, leg or arm feel weak or numb on one side of the body
 - you have trouble talking or understanding what others are saying
- ✓ Becoming suddenly disoriented
- ✓ Bleeding that won't stop after 10 minutes of applying pressure
- ✓ Feeling a sudden and severe pain
- ✓ Having trouble breathing after an insect bite, taking a medicine or eating food
- ✓ Having a severe injury on the head or having hit yourself on the head
- ✓ Having an injury where bone is showing



What if I am not sure how serious the symptoms are?

If you are not sure what to do, you can call 9-1-1. The dispatcher can tell if you need emergency services and will send the nearest ambulance, firefighters or police. These trained first aid workers will try to get your medical emergency under control but if they cannot, they will make sure you get to the hospital emergency room.

Will I have to pay something if I call 9-1-1?

Calling 9-1-1 is free, but the ambulance ride and other services you may get on the way to the hospital will cost you a lot of money. You can also get to the hospital on your own, but there are times when it is not safe to do that and you should ride an ambulance.

To know if you really need to ride an ambulance, ask yourself:

- Can your illness or injury get worse during the drive to the emergency room?
- Do you need special equipment or a trained health care worker to move you or help you get into a car?
- Is there a lot of traffic to get to the hospital or is the hospital very far away?

If the answer to any of these questions is YES, then you should ride an ambulance to the emergency room.





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How Can I Pay for My Health Care?

Hospital emergency rooms, urgent care centers, retail health clinics, doctors' offices and health centers are all options for getting health care. Just keep in mind that all of them have their own set of services and their costs are different. In general, hospital emergency rooms are the most expensive and the slowest way to get care.

If you need health care, it is good to know how you can pay for these services before you need them. This will depend a lot on whether you have medical insurance or not.



If you have medical insurance:

Call the place you want to go first and make sure they take your insurance.

REMEMBER: Depending on your insurance, you may still have to pay something when you go get health care services:



- **Deductible:** the amount of money you **MUST** pay from your own pocket before the insurance company starts paying for your services
- **Co-payment or copay:** a fixed amount of money that you **MUST** pay each time you receive a health care service, like for a doctor's visit or when you buy medicines

If you do not have medical insurance:

You should understand your options before going to get health care.



Hospital Emergency Rooms: They will give you the care you need but these services can be very expensive. Hospitals usually offer payment plans so you can pay your bill in smaller portions after you get care.



Retail health clinics, doctor's office and urgent care centers: Before going, call and ask if they take patients without insurance and how much their services cost. Ask if you have to pay right away or if they can give you a payment plan.



Health Centers: Health centers accept patients with or without health insurance. They offer payment plans. They also offer discounted fees so you can pay according to your family income.

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The Affordable Care Act allows you to buy your own private insurance from the new **Health Insurance Marketplace**. To find out more information visit: www.healthcare.gov

A few final things to keep in mind:

- Do not use hospital emergency rooms for primary health care services. If you do, this will be very expensive for you.
- If you need primary health care services, health centers are a good option. Health centers have prices that are often lower than a doctor's office. Many health centers take walk-ins and are open longer hours and on weekends.
- Other health care places like urgent care centers and retail health clinics are good options if you cannot wait until the next available appointment, but their services may cost more than health center services.

