

When to bring your child to the Emergency Room

Having a sick child can be stressful. It helps to know when to get medical help and when to get that help in an Emergency Room.

Here are examples of when it best to go to an Emergency Room. When it is not an emergency, it is best to treat your child's illness at a doctor's office, a walk-in clinic, or an urgent primary care centre instead.

When it is an emergency, go straight to the nearest Emergency Room.



fraserhealth.ca/UrgentCare

Emergency	Not an emergency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Breathing problems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • respiratory distress (working hard to breathe or breathing faster than normal) • pale skin, whitish or blue lips • asthma or wheezing and not responding to prescribed medications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Breathing problems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • nasal congestion and cough (even if it interrupts sleep) • symptoms of the 'common cold' • mild asthma or wheezing that responds to usual puffers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fever <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in a child less than 3 months old • with immune system problems or complex chronic health problems • very sleepy or difficult to wake • for more than 5 days in a child any age 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fever <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in healthy and vaccinated babies • in children who appear generally well
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Vomiting or diarrhea <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in a child less than 3 months old • repeated vomiting and unable to keep liquids down • vomiting or diarrhea containing large amount of blood • vomiting bright green • dehydration with dry mouth or no urine more than 12 hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Vomiting or diarrhea <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • vomiting or diarrhea less than 3 to 4 times a day • ongoing diarrhea after 'stomach flu' (this can last up to 2 weeks)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Injuries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • head injury with loss of consciousness (passing out) or confusion • head injury with visible bump behind the ears, sides of the head, or back of the head • head injury with visible swelling and the child is less than 3 months old • fall more than 4 feet or 1.2 metres, or down more than 5 stairs • cuts with gaping edges or continuing to bleed despite direct pressure • burns that blister and are larger than a Loonie • injury to arm or leg that looks crooked, causes inability to use the limb, or creates swelling that does not go down with ice and rest over 48 hours • eye injuries • injury causing chest or stomach pain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Injuries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • minor head injuries (with no loss of consciousness, no confusion and no vomiting) • mild head injuries with normal behavior within 4 hours of injury and bumps (even large) to the forehead • scrapes and bruises where the injured part can still be used • sun burns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Rashes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fever with a rash that looks like either blisters or bruises that don't turn white or fade when you push on them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Rashes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recurring rashes or skin problems • rashes with cough and cold symptoms, if the child looks well • mild hives that respond to antihistamines (Reactine®) without difficulty breathing or throat/tongue swelling

In the Emergency Department

We are committed to making sure that every child gets the care they need and the most urgent patients are seen first.

We see people based on how sick they are not by when or how they came to the hospital. This is not the same as a “line-up” for service. We always see and treat the sickest people first. We thank those coming for medical care for their patience and for treating us with respect.

Colds, the flu, and other viruses

Viruses, including colds, flu, and COVID-19, are very common in the fall, winter, and spring. Most young children in daycare or school will get sick with a virus more than once during these seasons. It can be frustrating to see your child sick every few weeks, and it might seem like their cough and runny nose never goes away. In fact, a cough can last for 2 to 3 weeks after getting infected with a virus. Many infections from viruses also cause fever. Fever is a sign the body’s immune system is working to fight the infection. Children often get higher fevers than adults who have the same infection. It is not unusual for a child with a virus like the flu to have a temperature of 39° to 40° C (102.2° to 104 F°). The fever itself is not dangerous but can make the child fussy or sleepy.

No fever-reducing medicine

If you are trying to treat a fever without fever-reducing medicine, here are other ways to treat the fever:

- Have your child drink plenty of fluids.
- Dress them in light clothing.
- Sponge them with cool or barely warm water.

Help stop the spread

Here are things we can all do to help stop the spread of all respiratory illness this season:

- Get all recommended vaccines including influenza and COVID-19 booster vaccine doses.
- Choose to wear a mask when in indoor public spaces.
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow or upper sleeve.
- Clean your hands often. Try not to touch your face, especially your eyes, mouth, and nose.
- When you don’t feel well, stay home and try not to spend time with people who are at higher risk of serious illness.

Mental health crisis

If your school counsellor or family doctor has concerns, ask them to speak directly with Mental Health Services. This could avoid the need to go to the Emergency Room.

To get urgent help if your child is thinking about ending their life:

- Call 9-1-1
or 1-800-SUICIDE.
- Contact our Short Term, Assessment, Response, Treatment (START) team at 1-844-782-7811.

Other resources

Here are things we can all do to help stop the spread of all respiratory illness this season:

- **Fraser Health Virtual Care**
1-800-314-0999
Live chat - fraserhealth.ca/virtualcare
10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., daily
- **HealthLinkBC.ca**
8-1-1 (7-1-1 TTY)
- **ChildHealthBC.ca**
- **Translating Emergency Knowledge for Kids**
(trekk.ca)
- **AboutKidsHealth.ca**

Please note: The Emergency Rooms do not have samples or medicines to take-home, such as Tylenol and Advil.