

WHEN AND WHERE TO SEEK MEDICAL CARE



A guide to Primary Care, Acute Care, and Emergency Services

When something doesn't feel right or you're experiencing unusual symptoms, it can be tempting to go straight to the Emergency Room (ER). However, there are other options that might be more appropriate and less costly. Knowing where to turn for the right level of care can make a big difference in how quickly you get treated and how much it costs.

Your **Primary Care Provider (PCP)** is your go-to for routine check-ups, preventive care, and managing chronic conditions. They know your health history and can offer personalized advice and treatment. If you're feeling unwell or experiencing new symptoms, your PCP is often the first person you should contact. They can assess your condition and, if necessary, refer you to specialists or provide treatment. **Acute Care/ Urgent Care** centers are perfect for those situations when you need prompt medical attention but it's not an emergency. These centers are equipped to handle illnesses or injuries that need quick care but are not life-threatening. In a life-threatening situation, don't hesitate to **call 911 or head straight to the ER**. The ER is equipped for critical care and emergencies where time is of the essence.

PRIMARY CARE



Call your doctor's office

- Routine check-ups
- Preventive screenings
- Annual immunizations
- Chronic conditions
- Medication refill/questions
- Referrals to specialty care
- Low grade fever (less than 104°)
- Other unexplained pain

ACUTE CARE



Go to Acute or Urgent Care

- Rash and itching
- Coughing/wheezing
- Sore throat
- Abdominal pain
- Headache/migraine
- Diarrhea
- COVID testing
- Ear pain/infection
- Insect bites/tick removal
- Urinary tract infections
- Cuts and lacerations
- Minor burns
- Fractures (closed, without dislocation)
- Sprains

EMERGENCY ROOM



Go to Emergency Room or call 911

- Severe head, neck, or back injury
- Severe heart palpitations
- Loss of consciousness/vision
- Severe abdominal pain
- Severe cuts and lacerations
- Seizures
- Shortness of breath
- Vaginal bleeding when pregnant
- Significant burns
- Unstable vital signs
- Chest pain with other heart related history/symptoms
- Sudden difficulty in speaking



Need Help After Hours? Call Our 24-Hour HELP Nurse Line. If you're unsure where to go or need medical advice after hours, our 24-Hour HELP Nurse line is here to provide guidance. Whether it's your child running a 102-degree fever at 2 AM or you've twisted your ankle and aren't sure what to do, our experienced nurses are ready to help. The next time you're unsure whether to see a doctor, put your mind at ease by calling our HELP Nurses at **563-556-4357** or **Toll-Free at 1-800-325-7442**.



KNOW STROKE

SIGNS, RISKS, & PREVENTION

A stroke, also known as a brain attack, occurs when blood flow to the brain is blocked or a blood vessel in the brain bursts. Stroke is the fifth leading cause of death in the U.S. and the most common cause of adult disability, often taking away a person's ability to talk, walk, and think clearly. It can cause severe, life-changing disruptions, but timely treatment can save brain cells and reduce or even reverse damage. Recognizing the signs and calling 911 immediately can make all the difference.

KNOW THE SYMPTOMS

ACT F.A.S.T. TO SAVE LIVES

F
FACE DROOPING
Does one side of the face droop when smiling?

A
ARM WEAKNESS
When arms are raised, does one drift down?

S
SPEECH DIFFICULTY
Is speech slurred or strange?

T
TIME TO CALL 911
Do not drive - call an ambulance immediately

RISK FACTORS FOR STROKE

Stroke can affect anyone, but some risk factors can't be changed, while others can be managed with healthy habits and medical care.

Uncontrollable Risk Factors:

- Age:** Risk increases with age, especially after 55.
- Family History:** Stroke in close relatives may increase risk.
- Gender:** Men have higher risk; women face worse outcomes.
- Prior Stroke or Heart Attack:** History of stroke, TIA, or heart disease increases risk.

Controllable Risk Factors:

- High Blood Pressure:** The leading cause of stroke—managing is essential.
- Diabetes:** Uncontrolled diabetes damages vessels, increasing risk.
- High Cholesterol:** Narrows arteries, limiting blood flow.
- Smoking & Alcohol:** Raise blood pressure, clot risk, and weakens arteries.
- Physical Inactivity & Poor Diet:** Can lead to obesity, high cholesterol, and stroke risk.

LOWER YOUR RISK FOR STROKE

Prevention is key to reducing stroke risk. Many of the risk factors can be controlled through medications and healthy lifestyle choices. The sooner you start taking steps to lower your risk, the better.

In recent years, a better understanding of the causes of stroke has helped Americans make lifestyle changes that have cut the stroke death rate nearly in half. Researchers at the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS) predict that, with continued attention to reducing stroke risks and by using currently available therapies and developing new ones, the impact of stroke can be significantly reduced.

6 WAYS TO LOWER RISK FOR STROKE

- Exercise & Be Physically Active
- Treat High Blood Pressure
- Control Cholesterol
- Eat Healthy
- Manage Diabetes
- Quit Smoking

YOUR FUTURE

A stroke can be life-altering. By understanding your risk factors, making heart-healthy choices, and recognizing the warning signs, you can take control of your health. Talk to your doctor about ways to lower your stroke risk and start making changes today for a healthier future.

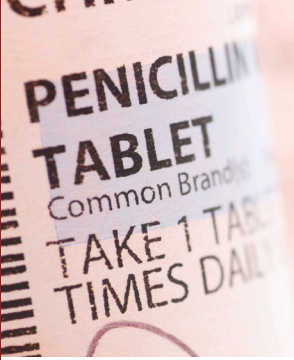
Sources: <https://www.cdc.gov/stroke/risk-factors/index.html>; <https://www.ninds.nih.gov/health-information/stroke>



UP TO

80%

OF STROKES
MAY BE
PREVENTED



Are you really allergic to Penicillin?



Penicillin is the most commonly reported drug allergy.

Did you know most penicillin allergies fade after 10 years? Common symptoms like hives, rash, and itching indicate an allergy, but many times, side effects from antibiotics—such as mild rashes or diarrhea—are misdiagnosed as allergic reactions.

Why is Penicillin Allergy Testing Important?

When a penicillin allergy is reported, it can limit your treatment options and may lead to the unnecessary use of broad-spectrum antibiotics. This is concerning because overuse of antibiotics can contribute to drug resistance, a growing health problem. In fact, nine out of ten patients who think they are allergic to penicillin are not actually allergic.

If you've had a reaction to penicillin in the past or avoid it due to concerns, it's a good idea to ask your doctor about allergy testing. This simple test can ensure you receive the best treatment options available. Here's what you need to know:

Q: I was told I had a penicillin allergy when I was younger. Is there a possibility that I might not have my allergy anymore?

A: Yes, it's very possible! Nine out of ten people who report a penicillin allergy are not actually allergic.

Q: How can I find out if I'm still allergic to penicillin?

A: It's easy! Simply contact your local Allergy Department to discuss penicillin allergy testing. The test only takes about an hour.

Q: If my penicillin allergy test comes back negative, can I take penicillin again?

A: If the test is negative, your healthcare provider will discuss whether you can safely take penicillin. Be sure to share your results with all your healthcare providers, as it can impact your antibiotic options moving forward.



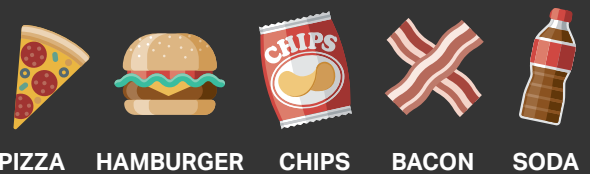
Remember, knowing your true allergy status is a simple yet powerful way to ensure you're receiving the most effective treatments. If you have any concerns or want to explore testing, don't hesitate to reach out to your healthcare provider!

Source: www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org



CUT THE SODIUM

FOODS LOADED WITH SODIUM



SODIUM INTAKE PER DAY

U.S. Average: **3400mg**
Recommended: **2000-2300mg**



EFFECT OF EXCESSIVE SODIUM

High Blood Pressure
Risk of Heart Attack
Risk of Stroke

HOW TO CUT BACK

- ✓ Eat more fresh foods
- ✓ Choose low-sodium products
- ✓ Eat at home
- ✓ Remove salt from recipes when possible
- ✓ Replace salt with other flavorings
- ✓ Go easy on the condiments



HEALTH AND WELLNESS OR PREVENTION INFORMATION

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563-556-8070 | 1-800-747-8900
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Your opportunity to improve healthcare quality.

An important survey from our certified vendor, SPH Analytics, a Press Ganey Solution, may have been sent to your home or email. **Your confidential responses help us improve the care we provide.**

Each year, health insurance companies, including Medical Associates Health Plans, conduct this standardized survey to better understand members' healthcare experiences and identify ways to enhance care in collaboration with doctors.

CAHPS measures patient experiences, focusing on doctor communication, medication instructions, and care coordination—not customer satisfaction.

Learn more about the CAHPS survey:
<https://www.ahrq.gov/cahps/surveys-guidance/hp/index.html>



FOR YOUR REFERENCE

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QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH INSURANCE?

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