



# HOW TO GET HELP FOR A SICK OR INJURED CHILD

## WHAT IS A CHILD HEALTH EMERGENCY?

A child health emergency is an illness or injury that may threaten a child's life if action is not taken right away, for instance:

- Loss of consciousness (the child cannot wake up or respond to you).
- Seizures or convulsions (bad shaking that will not stop).
- Choking on food, drink, or an object.
- Falls from high places.
- Severe burns.
- Breathing trouble.
- Eating or drinking something poisonous.
- Heavy bleeding that will not stop.
- Injuries from a car or bike crash.

Any time you think a child's life may be in danger, do not delay. If you are not sure, play it safe; call for emergency help right away!

## WHAT IS NOT A HEALTH EMERGENCY?

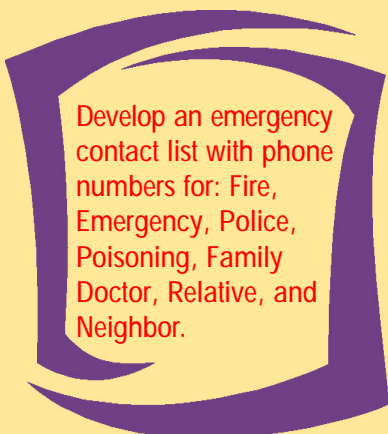
Sometimes a health problem needs a doctor's advice or help promptly but does not require the speed, special equipment, and training of emergency medical services (EMS) providers. These nonemergency problems may include small cuts, some fevers, diarrhea or constipation, stomachaches, earaches, minor bruises, nosebleeds, rashes, or sprains.

You can handle some of these problems yourself if you have basic first-aid skills and a first-aid kit. A

first-aid kit includes the following items: adhesive bandages and sterile gauze pads, various sizes; germicidal hand wipes or waterless alcohol-based hand sanitizer; antiseptic wipes; medical grade non-latex gloves; adhesive tape; anti-bacterial ointment; cold pack; scissors (small, personal); and tweezers.

If you are not sure about what to do for a health problem that is not an emergency, call the child's doctor.

## DIAL 911 OR YOUR LOCAL EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBER!



In some places, 911 is not the right number to call in an emergency. Check to see if 911 is the correct number to call where you live and work. If not, write down the correct number now on your emergency contact list. In most places,

you can get help by dialing just three numbers – 911. You can do this from any phone with a dial tone and an outside line. In most cities and towns, you can also reach 911 from a pay phone without using a coin. By calling 911, you can get help from police, the fire department, or EMS providers. When necessary in certain locations, a 911 call taker can add an interpreter from an outside service to the line. A non-English speaking caller may hear a short conversation in English and some clicking sounds as the

interpreter is added to the line.

Be sure that all adults and children in your home and all persons in your workplace know the right emergency number to call, and when to use it. Remind them that this number is only for emergencies. Calling this number when there is no emergency can delay help for someone whose life may depend on it. If you need to reach the police or fire department for

other reasons, use the nonemergency phone numbers. They are listed in your local phone book.

Keep your local emergency number posted next to all phones in your home or workplace.

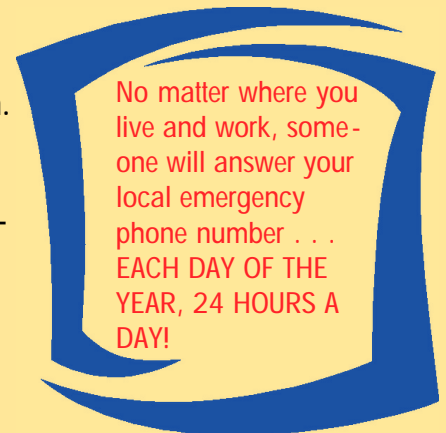
In an emergency, each second counts. When you need help right away, you will not want to lose the time it takes to look up that number!

## WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU CALL THE EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBER?

The person who answers your call is trained to find out what you need and get help to you quickly. Try to stay calm. You will be asked for your name, your address, and information about the child who needs help. Listen to the questions and provide brief, clear answers.

There may be steps you can take while you are waiting for help. In some places, the person who answers your call is trained to explain them. In such a case, that person will stay on the phone to tell you what to do while help is on the way. Actions you could take while you wait for help with some emergencies are very important. These are described in the fact sheet, "What to Do Until Help Arrives".

The trained EMS providers will arrive as soon as they can. They may provide some medical help on the spot. If needed, they will then take the child to the nearest hospital emergency room that is able to handle the problem. Let them take over the care of the child. They will tell you what will happen next and what you should do.



## WHAT SHOULD YOU DO FOR POISON EMERGENCIES?

With the phone help of the Poison Control Center that serves your city or town, you can handle most poison emergencies yourself. The number for this free call is 1-800-222-1222 and should be posted near all phones in your home or workplace.

In a poison emergency, if you think a child's life is in danger, the first thing to do is to call 911 or the correct emergency number in your city or town. For most poison emergencies, the best thing to do is to call the Poison Control Center right away at

1-800-222-1222. People who speak languages other than English should ask for a translator when they call. The poison center will set up a three-way call with a translator right away. Take the child and the poison with you to the phone if you can. Stay calm. Be ready to describe the poison that the child ate or drank, how much, and at what time. The person who answers the phone is trained to ask the right questions and to tell you what to do.

## WHAT CAN ALL OF US DO ABOUT CHILDHOOD EMERGENCIES? TAKE STEPS TO PREVENT THEM AND BE PREPARED



Adapted and updated from: How to Prevent & Handle Childhood Emergencies: A Handbook for Parents and People Who Care for Children, edited by Deborah Mulligan-Smith, MD, and Robert Lutten, MD, a product of the Emergency Medical Services for Children Program.

