



Preparing to go to the emergency department for COVID-19

This section* will answer the following questions:

- [When should I seek emergency medical care? \(page 39\)](#)
- [How do I check for signs of COVID-19? \(page 39\)](#)
- [What should I bring to the emergency department? \(page 42\)](#)
- [How do I safely get to the emergency department? \(page 45\)](#)
- [What happens when I get to the emergency department? \(page 46\)](#)

*Access the other sections of [this workbook](#) by visiting: <http://michmed.org/ng2W1>

Michigan Medicine Emergency Department:
1500 East Medical Center Drive, Ann Arbor, MI 48109
Phone: 734-936-6666



When should I seek emergency medical care?¹

If you have an emergency warning sign (including trouble breathing), **get emergency medical care immediately.**

Call 911 or call ahead to your local emergency facility:

- Tell the operator: I have or may have COVID-19.
- Put on masks before emergency personnel arrive or before going to the hospital.

Emergency warning signs for COVID-19

If someone is showing any of these signs, seek emergency medical care immediately:

- Trouble breathing
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion
- Inability to wake or stay awake
- Bluish lips or face

Note: This list does not include all of the possible symptoms of COVID-19. Please call your medical provider for any other symptoms that are severe or concerning to you.

How do I check for signs of COVID-19?

For non-emergency situations, access the [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\) Coronavirus Self-Checker](http://michmed.org/o5mm4) (<http://michmed.org/o5mm4>) to help you make decisions on when to seek testing and medical care.



**Centers for Disease Control (CDC)
Coronavirus Self-Checker**

<http://michmed.org/o5mm4>

How am I protected from getting COVID-19 in the emergency department?

Hospitals have long-standing commitments to your health care needs. For information on how Michigan Medicine is handling [hospital safety during COVID-19](http://michmed.org/wOopm), visit: <http://michmed.org/wOopm>

¹Adapted from: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Symptoms of Coronavirus. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html#seek-medical-attention>. Published May 13, 2020. Accessed November 11, 2020.



Thinking about going to the emergency department

Challenges you may have...

Uncertainty and disagreement

Deciding whether to go to the hospital can be stressful for everyone involved. You and your family may be conflicted about the seriousness of symptoms, the fear of catching COVID-19 at the hospital, or worry about burdening others. Tensions can be high and people may not act the way they normally do.

Strategies that can help:

- The CDC has published guidelines to help you make this decision. In this section, read [“When should I seek emergency medical care?” \(page 39\)](#)
- Think about why you want to or are opposed to going to the hospital. Have an honest and clear conversation with someone you trust about these feelings
- Reach out to an expert for advice. You could call:
 - Your primary care physician,
 - Michigan Medicine COVID-19 Hotline (734-763-6336)
 - State of Michigan COVID-19 Hotline (888-535-6136)

“The bottom line is, if you can’t breathe, go directly to the emergency department. Do not wait.”

-Theodore J. Iwashyna, MD, PhD, Pulmonary & Critical Care Medicine, Michigan Medicine



How do I prepare for a visit to the emergency department?



If you are a patient

- Monitor yourself for the CDC's Emergency Warning Signs (see [“When should I seek emergency medical care?” on page 39](#))
- Identify the hospital you will go to
- Ask your doctor to call the emergency department ahead of your arrival
- Plan for household tasks to be taken care of, including childcare or petcare, if needed
- Pack an emergency bag with personal items including a cell phone charger
- Bring a written list of emergency contact information and current medications
- Arrange for safe transportation to the hospital; **wear masks in the car**



If you are a caregiver

- Monitor the patient for the CDC's Emergency Warning Signs (see [“When should we seek emergency medical care?” on page 39](#))
- Identify the hospital the patient will go to
- Plan for household tasks to be taken care of, including childcare or petcare, if needed
- Pack an emergency bag with personal items for yourself and the patient, include a cell phone charger
- Keep a notebook and pen with you to keep track of information you may receive
- Identify a point person who will share information with family and friends so you can focus on the patient

Continue reading for more information to help you with these steps.





What should I bring to the emergency department?²

Pack an emergency bag

When you are going to the emergency department, you should prepare as if you might stay in the hospital overnight. Consider bringing the following items.

Packing a bag for the patient

- Photo ID
- Health insurance card
- List of medications
- Medical history (health conditions and surgeries)
- Change of clothes
- Glasses
- Toiletries
 - Toothbrush
 - Hairbrush
 - Other: _____
- Phone
- Phone charger
- Headphones
- Something to keep you warm such as a coat or small blanket
- Dentures and case
- Any other medical equipment you usually use, such as a C-PAP

Packing a bag for the caregiver

Hospital rules about visitors and caregivers can change frequently.

Prepare as if you are not allowed to enter the hospital due to COVID-19 and need to find a place to wait outside.

You may be waiting for quite a long time.

- Water bottle
- Phone
- Phone charger
- A book or something to keep you occupied while you wait

NOTE: Due to the changing nature of restrictions required by COVID-19, caregivers may not be allowed to enter the hospital. For the latest [visitor policies at Michigan Medicine](https://www.michiganmedicine.org/visitor-policies), visit: <http://michmed.org/gkmaqW>

Before you leave, don't forget to also include:

- Your own daily medications
- Reading glasses
- Hearing aids
- Mask
- Hand sanitizer
- Snacks, such as protein or granola bars

Please note, there are times when you may move rooms or leave your room and may not be able to secure your things. Consider leaving jewelry and other high value items at home. Clearly label important belongings with your name and information. The hospital is not responsible for loss of such items.

² Adapted from: Leukemia & Lymphoma Society. Worksheet 1: Emergency Room (ER) Plan. In: Caregiver Workbook. 2019:1-3. https://www.lls.org/sites/default/files/National/USA/Pdf/Publications/Caregiver_Worksheet_1_ER_2019.pdf. Accessed November 11, 2020.



Write down your childcare and pet care plans

If you have children, make a plan for childcare. Think of the short-term and longer-term.

Example Plan: My neighbor can stay with my children (short-term) until my family member arrives (longer-term).

My childcare plan

My short-term plan is: _____

Name: _____

Phone Number(s): _____

Email: _____

Notes: _____

My longer-term plan is: _____

Name: _____

Phone Number(s): _____

Email: _____

Notes: _____

My pet care plan

If you have pets, you may want to consider asking a neighbor, friend, or family member to check in on them. Give them a spare key and your veterinarian's contact information, in advance, in case your visit to the emergency department lasts for more than a few hours.

Name: _____

Phone Number(s): _____

Email: _____

Notes: _____



How do I safely get to the emergency department?³

If the situation is an emergency, call 911 immediately for an ambulance. Notify the operator that you are seeking care for someone who has or may have COVID-19.

If you decide to drive to the emergency department:

- ✓ Do **not** drive yourself if you are experiencing any of the CDC's Emergency Warning Signs (see [“When should we seek emergency medical care?” on page 39](#))
- ✓ Ask your doctor to call the emergency department ahead of your arrival
- ✓ Also call ahead yourself to let the emergency department know you are coming (for Michigan Medicine, call 734-936-6666)
 - ✓ Tell the operator that you or someone with you has or may have COVID-19
 - ✓ Ask “Where can I park?”
 - ✓ Ask “Will the caregiver be allowed to come into the hospital?”
- ✓ Wash or sanitize your hands, both before you leave home and when you arrive
- ✓ Bring cleaning supplies (such as wipes and hand sanitizer) to wipe down commonly touched areas in the car
- ✓ While driving to the emergency department:
 - ✓ Go directly to the hospital. Do **not** go on errands along the way
 - ✓ Wear a mask (masks should not be worn by, those having difficulty breathing, children under 2 years old, or those unable to take off their own mask)
 - ✓ Sit as far away from each other in the vehicle as possible
 - ✓ Open the car windows and turn your fan on to increase air circulation
- ✓ After you drop off the patient, clean commonly touched areas with wipes and use hand sanitizer

³ Adapted from:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Considerations for Non-emergency Vehicle Transportation for Tribal Communities During COVID-19. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/tribal/non-ems-transportation.html>. Published 2020. Accessed November 11, 2020.

Department of Public Health City of Philadelphia. Guidance for Transport of Patients with Confirmed or Suspected COVID-19 by Family Members or Other Non-Professionals. Philadelphia; 2020. <https://www.phila.gov/media/20200329105204/Guide-for-transport-of-patients.pdf>. Accessed November 11, 2020.



What happens when I get to the Michigan Medicine emergency department?



Above: The entrance to the U-M Hospital Emergency Department.⁴

How does drop-off and parking work?

- Go directly to the hospital Adult Emergency entrance
- If the caregiver is allowed to enter the hospital:
 - The valet at the Emergency entrance can park your car for free
 - If the valet is not able to park your car, they can tell you where to go to park
- If the caregiver is not allowed to enter the hospital:
 - Many people wait in their car in the parking lot
- To learn more about [parking at U-M Hospital](http://michmed.org/XrvOj) (call 734-764-7474 or visit <http://michmed.org/XrvOj>)
- Due to the changing nature of COVID-19, visitors may not be allowed to enter the hospital. For the latest [visitor policies at Michigan Medicine](http://michmed.org/gkmqW), visit: <http://michmed.org/gkmqW> or call 734-936-6666

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For the latest [visitor policies at Michigan Medicine](http://michmed.org/gkmqW), visit: <http://michmed.org/gkmqW> or call 734-936-6666

⁴ Michigan Medicine Security. Security Car Hospital Entrance. https://storage.googleapis.com/dpss-wordpress-prod/2/2017/06/Sec_CarHos_Entrance.jpg. Published 2014. Accessed November 14, 2020.



What happens when I get to the Michigan Medicine emergency department?

Emotions you may have...

Helplessness, guilt, and relief

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, many hospitals only allow patients to enter the emergency department. Some caregivers may feel guilty that they cannot accompany their family member inside the hospital. On the other hand, many feel relieved knowing the patient is now receiving the care they need. Both patients and caregivers may feel uncertainty about what will happen next or how to stay in touch with each other.

Strategies that can help:

- Call a family member or friend, journal about your experience, or reach out to your faith community
- Find the best way to stay in touch. Visit workbook sections “Helping Patients and Caregivers Stay Connected” and “Communicating With Your Care Team”
- For non-urgent professional help, you can call a warmline, a telephone line to provide assistance for those whose need is not urgent. Find your [local warmlines](#) by visiting: <http://michmed.org/48mY4>

How can I find a place to stay overnight while the patient is in the hospital?

- Contact the [UMHS Patient & Visitor Accommodations Program](#) to find a room in Ann Arbor at lower cost (call 800-544-8684 or visit www.med.umich.edu/hotels)
- If lodging or meals related to appointments is causing a financial burden, the [Guest Assistance Program](#) may be able to help (call 800-888-9825 or visit <http://michmed.org/q4kRz>)

Patient and Visitor Michigan Medicine General Help Line

800-888-9825



What happens when I get to the Michigan Medicine emergency department?

What happens once you are at the emergency department may change depending on the number of COVID-19 cases in the area. For the latest information about [what to expect at the Michigan Medicine emergency department](http://michmed.org/48mXq), visit: <http://michmed.org/48mXq>

Usually, you will be asked questions related to COVID-19 and have your temperature taken. Next, you may move through four stages⁵:

1. Triage: Hospital staff determine who needs to be evaluated first given their condition and the urgency of their wounds or illness. You may have a long wait between Triage and the next stage (Evaluation).

2. Evaluation: Nurses and technicians will determine your health problems.

- You may be given a COVID-19 test
- You will be asked about your symptoms
- Your vital signs will be taken (blood pressure, pulse, oxygen levels, etc.)

3. Registration:

The hospital registrar will ask you to confirm your:

- Address
- Primary care doctor
- Insurance information
- Preferred pharmacy

4. Discharge or hospital stay: After being evaluated in the emergency department, you may be sent home with care instructions (**discharge**) or moved to another room in the hospital (**hospitalization**). If you are hospitalized, a member of the hospital security team can help you secure any personal belongings that you are not able to send home.



Above: Stages of care in the emergency department, from Triage to Discharge or Hospitalization.⁶

⁵ Adapted from: Michigan Medicine. Emergency Department Patient Guide. <https://www.uofmhealth.org/conditions-treatments/emergency/emergency-department-patient-guide>. Published 2020. Accessed November 12, 2020.

⁶ Michigan Medicine. Emergency Department Patient Guide: Triage Process Flowchart. https://www.uofmhealth.org/sites/default/files/triage_process_flowchart-2.png. Published 2020. Accessed November 14, 2020.



Help improve these materials

Please help make these materials better for other patients and caregivers.

[Share your feedback here \(http://michmed.org/lApBN\)](http://michmed.org/lApBN), or scan the QR code.

This Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement effort was reviewed under IRB-Med #HUM00190878 and determined not to require IRB approval (Not Regulated - non-research).

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Support for the creation of these materials provided by: the University of Michigan Institute for Social Research, Michigan Medicine, and the Procter & Gamble Company.

Authorship: The BioSocial Methods Collaborative and HEART Research Project Team
(<https://heart.isr.umich.edu/meet-our-research-team/>)

Plain Language Editing: Karelyn Munro, BA

How to cite:

BioSocial Methods Collaborative and HEART Research Project Team. Preparing to go to the emergency department for COVID-19. In: *COVID-19 Patient & Caregiver Collaborative Care Workbook*. Ann Arbor: Michigan Medicine; 2020: 1-14. doi:[10.3998/2027.42/163715](https://doi.org/10.3998/2027.42/163715)

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Last Revised 12/2020, Version 1.0.0

