

# HEALTH ALERT

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## Call 911 in a Medical Emergency

**In an Emergency, Act Without Delay!**

The Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) is aware that in some recently reported injuries and deaths, there was an apparent delay in seeking emergency medical care. There are two key issues in reducing this risk for delay: 1. Recognizing a medical emergency - because correctly interpreting and acting on these signs could potentially save a life. 2. Seeking immediate attention for the emergency. With medical emergencies, time is of the essence, and delays in treatment can often lead to more serious consequences, or even death. Policies that require staff to contact supervisors before calling 911 jeopardize the health and welfare of the individual. This Health Alert is intended to help providers and staff respond to medical emergencies by contacting 911 without delay.

**What is a Medical Emergency?** *Any event that threatens someone's life or limb in such a way that immediate medical care is needed to prevent death or serious impairment of health; such as severe pain, bad injury, serious illness or a medical condition that is quickly getting worse.*

The American College of Emergency Physicians advises everyone learn to recognize the warning signs of a medical emergency. Unsure whether it's a medical emergency? Ask these questions:

- Is the condition life or limb threatening?
- Could the condition worsen quickly on the way to the hospital?
- If you move the victim, will it cause further injury?
- Does the person need skills or equipment that paramedics or EMT's carry right away?

If you answer YES or "I Don't Know"  **Call 911 right away**



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The list of signs and symptoms below is not intended to represent every kind of medical emergency or substitute for a physician's medical advice, but rather to provide examples of common issues. Print this list and place it where it can be readily accessible.

**When in doubt, call 911.**

## **WARNING SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS**

### **CALL 911 WHEN:**

- A fast heartbeat (more than 120-150) at rest especially if associated with shortness of breath or feeling faint
- Allergic reaction, especially if there is any difficulty breathing (anaphylactic shock)
- Bleeding from any wound that won't stop
- Bleeding from the mouth, nose, vagina or rectum that won't stop
- Broken bones visible through an open wound, or a broken leg
- Chest or upper abdominal pain or pressure lasting two minutes or more
- Choking
- Confusion or changes in mental status, unusual behavior, difficulty waking
- Coughing or vomiting blood
- Difficulty breathing, shortness of breath
- Drowning
- Drug overdose or poisoning
- Extremely hot or cold skin/body temperature
- Fainting, sudden dizziness, weakness
- Fall with suspected injury
- Motor vehicle accident injury
- Neck or back injury
- New severe headache
- Numbness, or weakness of any part of the body
- Seizures that are new or uncontrolled
- Severe burns
- Severe or persistent vomiting or diarrhea
- Severe or sudden pain
- Someone is unresponsive or unconscious
- Speech changes including slurred speech or difficulty speaking
- Sudden blindness or vision changes
- Suicidal or homicidal feelings or statements
- Unusual abdominal pain

<b>Signs and Symptoms to Keep in Mind</b>		
<b>Heart Attack</b>	<b>Stroke</b>	<b>Heat Stroke</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Tightness in the chest</li> <li>✓ Pain in the arm</li> <li>✓ Shortness of breath</li> </ul>	<p><b>F</b> - one side of face drooping</p> <p><b>A</b> - is one arm weak; can't raise</p> <p><b>S</b> - slurred speech/confusing</p> <p><b>T</b> – Time to call 911</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Body temperature over 103° F</li> <li>✓ Hot, red, dry or moist skin</li> <li>✓ Rapid and strong pulse</li> <li>✓ Unconscious</li> </ul>

### **What to Do When Calling 911**

- Remain calm
- **Call 911 PRIOR to calling supervisor or other agency staff members.**
- Stay on the line to answer dispatcher's questions
  - Provide your name, phone number and location
  - Describe what happened
- Keep the connection open until the dispatcher tells you to hang up

### **What You Can Do Now**

- Learn the signs and symptoms of a medical emergency
- Train staff on when to call 911, to apply CPR, and start first aid
- Update policies to assure timely response is not delayed. Agency policy must not require staff to contact supervisors or other persons prior to calling 911 in a medical emergency.
- Practice emergency drills across all shifts

### **For More Information**

You can learn more about recognizing and acting on emergency warning signs through classes offered through the local hospital, American Red Cross, American Heart Association or the Health Care Quality Units (HCQUs) of Pennsylvania.

**The following websites were used for this Alert and can provide additional information about when to call 911:**

<http://www.redcross.org/> - This site also offers smart phone apps

<http://www.emergencycareforyou.org/Emergency-101/Is-it-an-Emergency-/>



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<http://www.emergencycareforyou.org/Content.aspx?id=2079>

<https://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/001927.htm>

<http://www.symptomfind.com/health/when-to-call-911-emergency/#kkGiKRsoVzevarS.99>