

# Understanding triage

## What is triage?

The first person you'll see when you arrive in the emergency department is a triage paramedic or nurse.

Triage staff will ask questions about what's brought you here. They will also ask about existing health conditions and any medications you are taking. They will measure your vital signs too.



BREATHING



PULSE



BLOOD PRESSURE



TEMPERATURE

## What is a triage score and how does it affect my wait?

Once triage staff have gathered your information and measured your vital signs, they will assign you a score between **1** and **5**. This affects the order in which you are seen.

**1** → **2** → **3** → **4** → **5**

## How do you decide on a person's triage score?

We use the Canadian Triage Acuity Scale (CTAS) to assess people who come to the emergency department. CTAS is used across Canada as the standard triage system in emergency medicine.

## What does each triage score mean?

**Level 1: Life-threatening** – Your heart has stopped or you've experienced life-threatening trauma

**Level 2: Emergency** – You have symptoms of a heart attack or stroke, not conscious, having a lot of trouble breathing, or bleeding severely

**Level 3: Urgent** – You have a head injury, deep cut, chest pain (unrelated to known heart issue), serious infection, urgent mental health concern

**Level 4: Less urgent** – You have a sprain or break, cuts, pain in back, arm or legs

**Level 5: Not urgent** – You have a sore throat, ear infection, minor cuts or bumps, prescription refill

Patients will be seen in the order of their triage score, starting with level 1.