

Patient & Family Guide
2018

Your Emergency Department Visit



Aussi disponible en français :
Votre visite au service d'urgence (FF85-1851)

لعرىبىة اةغللاب اىضاً متوفر
Also available in Arabic: (AR85-2323)



www.nshealth.ca

How long will I wait?

Emergency department wait times depend on:

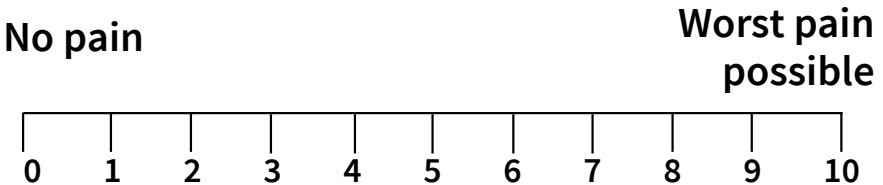
- How urgently you and others need care. Read more about triage levels inside this pamphlet.
- How busy the emergency department is.
- Once you have been assessed, you may need some tests (e.g. X-rays or lab tests) or need to be seen by a specialist.

If you decide to leave the emergency department without being seen by a physician, please tell our triage staff.

What can I expect when I come to the emergency department for care?

Soon after you arrive you will be assessed by a triage nurse or paramedic.

Triage staff will ask you questions about why you're here. They will check your breathing, pulse, blood pressure and temperature. They will also ask about existing health conditions, medications and your level of pain.



Based on the information they gathered, triage staff will assign you a score between one and five. This number affects the order in which patients are seen, with the most serious problems addressed first.

We use the Canadian Triage Acuity Scale (CTAS) to assess people who come to the emergency departments. CTAS is the standard triage system used across Canada to figure out how bad your injury or illness is and plan what to do next.

Why is another person going ahead of me?

- Patients are seen by a doctor in order of need.
- It is not always possible to tell how ill someone is by looking at them.
- A patient who appears OK may need attention right away.
- Some patients are asked to return to the emergency department to be seen again by other staff or a specialist.
- In some emergency departments, people with minor injuries or illnesses can be treated in a different area, either inside or outside of the department.

The waiting room is almost empty. Why the wait?

The waiting room could be almost empty, but someone may be receiving life-saving care within the department.

Do patients who arrive by ambulance receive care more quickly?

Patients who arrive by ambulance are triaged like other patients. They will wait for care according to their triage level, the same as other patients.

Patients who arrive by ambulance may be asked to leave their stretcher and wait in the waiting room.

What are your questions?

Please ask. We are here to help you.

Triage levels

Level 1	<p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">› Your heart has stopped or you've experienced a life-threatening trauma. You will receive treatment right away.
Level 2	<p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">› having symptoms of a heart attack or stroke› not conscious› having a lot of trouble breathing› severe bleeding
Level 3	<p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">› head injury, deep cut or foreign object in eyes or ears› chest pain (not related to a known heart problem)› signs of serious infection› urgent mental health concerns
Level 4	<p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">› You have back, arm or leg pain or cuts.
Level 5	<p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">› You have a sore throat, ear infection, minor cuts or bumps› You have a medication request› This is a return visit

What else can I do?

- Your family practice or a local walk-in clinic may be the best place for care for non-urgent injury or illness. You'll also likely have a shorter wait.
- If you do not have a family practice, call 811 or visit www.needafamilypractice.ca to join a provincial wait list.
- Call 811 to talk to a registered nurse and get advice on non-urgent medical matters. This service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- Make sure that you and your family have enough prescribed medication, especially over vacations, holidays and weekends.
- Your community pharmacist may offer advice on non-urgent medication matters, such as migraines, flu-like symptoms, and prescription renewals and refills.
- If you have a chronic illness, keep your regular appointments with your health care provider.
- Ask your health care provider what changes in your medical condition would need urgent medical attention.

Notes:

Looking for more health information?

Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here: <http://library.nshealth.ca/PatientGuides>

Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.

For more information, go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time: call 811 or visit <https://811.novascotia.ca>

Learn about other programs and services in your community: call 211 or visit <http://ns.211.ca>

Nova Scotia Health Authority promotes a smoke-free, vape-free, and scent-free environment.

Please do not use perfumed products. Thank you!

Nova Scotia Health Authority

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 If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

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The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.

