

Confused About Where to Go for Care?

Smart health care choices may save you money.

Sometimes it's easy to know when you should go to an emergency room (ER). At other times, it's less clear. Where do you go when you have an ear infection, or you are generally not feeling well? The emergency room can be an expensive option. The chart below may help you figure out when to use each type of care.

When you use Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois (BCBSIL) in-network providers for your family's health care, you usually pay less for care. Search for in-network providers in your area at bcbsil.com or by calling the Customer Service number on the back of your member ID card.



If you need emergency care, call 911 or seek help from any doctor or hospital immediately.

¹ 24/7 Nurseline is not a substitute for a doctor's care. Talk to your doctor about any health questions or concerns.

² Medical Practice Pulse Report 2009, Press Ganey Associates.

³ Urgent Care Benchmarking Study Results. Journal of Urgent Care Medicine, January 2012.






⁴ Emergency Department Pulse Report 2010 Patient Perspectives on American Health Care. Press Ganey Associates.

⁵ The Texas Association of Health Plans.

Note: The relative costs described here are for independently contracted network providers. Your costs for out-of-network providers may be significantly higher. Wait times described are just estimates.

The information provided in this guide is not intended as medical advice, nor meant to be a substitute for the individual medical judgment of a doctor or other health care professional. Please check with your doctor for individualized advice on the information provided. Coverage may vary depending on your specific benefit plan and use of network providers. For questions, please call the number on the back of your member ID card.

Deciding Where to Go? Doctor, Retail Clinic, Urgent Care or ER.

	Doctor's Office 	Retail Health Clinic 	Urgent Care Center 	Hospital ER 	Freestanding ER 
Who usually provides care	Primary Care Doctor	Physician Assistant or Nurse Practitioner	Internal Medicine, Family Practice and Pediatric	ER Doctors, Internal Medicine, Specialists	ER Doctors
Sprains, strains	■	■	■	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any life-threatening or disabling conditions Sudden or unexplained loss of consciousness Major injuries Chest pain; numbness in the face, arm or leg; difficulty speaking Severe shortness of breath High fever with stiff neck, mental confusion or difficulty breathing Coughing up or vomiting blood Cut or wound that won't stop bleeding Possible broken bones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most major injuries except for trauma¹ May also provide imaging and lab services but do not offer trauma or cardiac services requiring catheterization¹ Do not always accept ambulances
Animal bites	■	■	■		
X-rays			■		
Stitches			■		
Mild asthma	■	■	■		
Minor headaches	■	■	■		
Back pain	■	■	■		
Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea	■	■	■		
Minor allergic reactions	■	■	■		
Coughs, sore throat	■	■	■		
Bumps, cuts, scrapes	■	■	■		
Rashes, minor burns	■	■	■		
Minor fevers, colds	■	■	■		
Ear or sinus pain	■	■	■		
Burning with urination	■	■	■		
Eye swelling, irritation, redness or pain	■	■	■		
Vaccinations	■	■	■		

Urgent Care Center or Freestanding ER Knowing the Difference Can Save You Money

Urgent care centers and freestanding ERs can be hard to tell apart. Freestanding ERs often look a lot like urgent care centers, but costs may be higher. A visit to a freestanding ER often results in surprise medical bills that may be 10 times the rate charged by urgent care centers for the same services.² Here are some ways to know if you are at a freestanding ER.

Freestanding ERs:

- Look like urgent care centers, but include EMERGENCY or ER in facility names.
- Are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- Are physically separate from a hospital.
- Are subject to the same ER member share which may include a copay, coinsurance and applicable deductible.

Find urgent care centers³ near you by texting⁴ **URGENTIL** to **33633**.

¹ "Freestanding ED 101: What you need to know" July 2016, The Advisory Board Company.

² The Texas Association of Health Plans.

³ The closest urgent care center may not be in your network. Be sure to check Provider Finder[®] to make sure the center you go to is in-network.

⁴ Message and data rates may apply. Read terms, conditions and privacy policy at bcbstil.com/mobile/text-messaging.