

Getting care when you need it now



Emergency room (ER) wait times are at an all-time high.¹ Your care doesn't need to be so crowded and costly. You have options, even when you need care right away.

The first place you likely call when you're having a health issue is your doctor — you might call him/her your “family doctor” or “primary care doctor.” That's because this person and their office staff may know you better than other doctors.

But what do you do when you can't see your doctor soon enough and you need care right away for a nonemergency? At Empire BlueCross BlueShield (Empire), we're working with doctors to give you alternatives when you really don't need the emergency room. This can help provide urgent treatment faster and, in many cases, less expensively.

Using an in-network urgent care medical practice, and not an ER, could help lower premiums in the future. Plus, most are open weeknights and weekends.

Urgent care medical practice — A group of doctors who treat conditions that should be looked at right away, but aren't as severe as emergencies. Care is typically given by a primary care doctor either during office hours or, in some cases, after hours.

Once you have ruled out a true emergency and before you decide to go to the ER, call the urgent care medical practice and ask:

- Are you in Empire's network?
- Do you have the services I need?
- What are your hours?

For the most up-to-date list of in-network urgent care medical practices, including hours they are open, visit empireblue.com.

Deciding where to go? Incorporate LiveHealth Online as an ER alternative option. Commonly treated conditions include cough, cold, minor rashes, allergies, diarrhea, ear pain, fever, flu, headache and pink eye.

Emergency room rule of thumb

Call 911 or go to the emergency room if you think you could put your health at serious risk by delaying care.

Want more information on ER alternatives?

1. Call our 24/7 NurseLine at **1-877-Talk 2 RN or 1-877-825-5276**.
2. If you don't have access to the 24/7 NurseLine, you can find an urgent care medical practice near you by visiting empireblue.com. Or go online for an easy way to find in-network ER alternatives in your area. **Search Google™, Yahoo!® or Bing™ by typing “Empire NY Urgent Care.”**
3. Sign up at livehealthonline.com for an online telemedicine visit.

<p>Urgent care medical practice*</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sprains, strains • Animal bites • X-rays • Stitches • Mild asthma • Minor headaches • Back pain • Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<p>Cost share may vary based on plan design. Typically, visits are subject to an office visit copay. If you need additional services such as lab tests, X-rays or in office surgery, you could have other costs such as coinsurance, copays or deductibles.</p>
<p>Emergency room</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any life-threatening or disabling condition • Sudden or unexplained loss of consciousness • 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 • Major injuries • Possible broken bones 		

* Each urgent care medical practice may have different services available. Be sure to go to empireblue.com to find the list of participating urgent care medical practices closest to you. See your policy for complete coverage details.

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Hospital Ambulatory Care Survey, August 2008.

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