

Patient & Family Guide

2024

Your Emergency Department Visit

Our goal is to get you home.

متوفر أيضاً باللغة العربية.

Also available in Arabic: AR85-2323

Aussi disponible en français : FF85-1851



www.nshealth.ca

Your Emergency Department Visit

Trained interpreters are available at no cost. Please tell a staff member if you need an interpreter.

How long will I wait?

- Emergency Department (ED) wait times depend on:
 - › how urgently you and others need care (see page 5 for information on triage levels).
 - › how busy the ED is.
 - › if there has been a major trauma event.
- Once you have been seen, you may need tests (like X-rays or lab tests) or need to be seen by a specialist. Please do not eat or drink while you are waiting to be seen. Please talk with the triage nurse if you have any questions.
- **If your condition changes or you decide to leave the ED without being seen, please talk with a staff member.**

- **You know yourself best. If there is a change in your condition, please tell a member of the ED care team as soon as possible.** If your ED has a patient advocate available, talk to them about these changes in your condition right away.

We strongly encourage you to wait to be seen by a health care provider after being triaged.

What can I expect when I come to the ED?

- Soon after you arrive, you will be checked by a triage care provider. They will assess you for any conditions you may have, like a serious infection, stroke, or mental health concern. They will:
 - › ask you about why you are there.
 - › check your breathing, pulse, blood pressure, and temperature.
 - › ask if you have any health conditions.
 - › ask if you are taking medication(s) (prescription or over-the-counter).
 - › ask about your health information to help guide your care.

They may ask you to rate your level of pain on a scale from 0 to 10, if needed. “0” is no pain and “10” is the worst pain you have ever had.

- Based on your assessment, you will be assigned a triage score between 1 and 5. This number decides the order in which people are seen. People with the most serious problems are often seen first.
- We use the Canadian Triage and Acuity Scale (CTAS) as a guide to assess how sick a person is when they come to the ED. This makes sure patients who need help right away because they have a life-threatening illness or injury, are seen first.
- Please tell a member of the ED health care team if you have a personal care directive (PD) or an advanced care directive.
- Please limit the number of essential care partners (ECPs) to 1 or 2.

Why is someone else going ahead of me?

- People are seen in order of need.
- It is not always possible to tell how sick someone is by looking at them. Someone who appears OK may need attention right away.

- Some people are called from the waiting room to be seen by different ED team members. They may return to the waiting area to wait for another staff member or specialist.
- In some EDs, people with a minor injury or illness can be treated in a different area, either inside or outside of the ED. These people may be waiting in another part of the ED.

The waiting room is almost empty. Why do I have to wait?

- The waiting room may be almost empty but:
 - › someone may be getting life-saving care in the ED.
 - › other patients may be waiting to be seen in another ED waiting room you cannot see.

Do people who arrive by ambulance get care sooner?

- People who arrive by ambulance are triaged the same way. Everyone must wait for care according to their triage level.
- People who arrive by ambulance may be asked to leave their stretcher and wait in the waiting room.

Loved ones and essential care partners (ECPs)

- We know that your loved ones and ECPs are an important part of your healing and recovery.
- Restrictions on how many loved ones and ECPs you may bring with you to the ED may change. Please follow guidelines provided when you arrive.
- If needed, your ECPs may be asked to leave during certain procedures.
- All patients and ECPs are asked to respect the privacy of others while in the ED.

Respectful workplace (Code of conduct)

We will not tolerate violence, swearing, threats, or verbal abuse towards patients, staff, or visitors.

If this happens, you will be given a verbal warning. If the behaviour continues, you will be asked to leave by ED staff, Security, and/or the police.

Triage levels

Level 1

- For example:
 - › Your heart has stopped.
 - › You had a life-threatening trauma.
 - › You are having symptoms of a stroke.
- You will be treated right away.

Level 2

- For example:
 - › You are having symptoms of a heart attack.
 - › You are not conscious.
 - › You are having a lot of trouble breathing.
 - › You have severe (very bad) bleeding.

Level 3

- For example:
 - › You have a head injury, a deep cut, or a foreign object in your eye or ear.
 - › You have chest pain that is not related to a known heart problem.
 - › You have signs of serious infection.
 - › You have an urgent mental health concern.

Level 4

- For example:
 - › You have back, arm, or leg pain, or a cut(s).

Level 5

- For example:
 - › You have a sore throat, an ear infection, a minor cut(s), or a bump(s).
 - › You need medications.
 - › This is a return visit.

Resources other than the ED

- Make an appointment with your primary health care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner) or go to a walk-in clinic, or an Urgent Treatment Centre.
- **If you do not have a primary health care provider, you can join a provincial wait list:**
 - › Phone: 811
 - › <https://needafamilypractice.nshealth.ca/>
- You can call 811 to talk with a registered nurse about your health care questions 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

- There may be a Community Pharmacy Care Clinic in your community that offers a variety of services. To find one in your area:
 - › Call your local pharmacy.

Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia

- › Phone: 902-422-9583

**For mental health support 24 hours a day,
7 days a week:**

Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Crisis Line

- › Phone (toll-free): 1-888-429-8167
- › <https://mha.nshealth.ca/en>

Suicide Crisis Helpline

- › Phone: 988

Remember:

- Make sure you have enough prescribed medications, especially during weekends, holidays, and vacations.
- Your pharmacist may be able to help with non-urgent medication questions (like migraines, flu-like symptoms, and prescription renewals and refills).
- If you have a chronic (ongoing) illness, keep your regular appointments with your health care provider. Ask them what changes in your medical condition would need medical attention right away.

Home First and discharge planning

- If you are admitted to the hospital after coming to the ED, it is important to start planning for your discharge home right away. Right now, you may not feel ready to go home. Our team will work with you to make sure that you have the support you need to go home.
- We know that for most people, living at home is where they want to be.
- Home First is about:
 - › creating a discharge plan with the goal of getting you back home.
 - › providing the care you need to keep living at home.
- We know that it can be stressful to find and put in place all of the programs and services you need. **Please ask for a referral to Home First.** We can connect you to programs and services in your area.
- We can help you figure out the best next step for you if you meet one of these:
 - › You are facing health changes that affect your ability to meet your needs.

OR

- › You are helping a loved one who wishes to return home from the hospital, but needs help to do this.
- We work with you and your loved ones to find the best ways to support you at home.

My ED visit

Diagnosis

- Who did I see today? _____

Tests and treatments

- What tests or treatments did I have today?

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blood work | <input type="checkbox"/> Scope |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CT scan | <input type="checkbox"/> Ultrasound |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ECG/EKG | <input type="checkbox"/> X-ray |
| <input type="checkbox"/> IV (intravenous) | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> MRI | |

- Results: _____

Medications

- I know what medication(s) I have been given in the ED:

- | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Ask |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|

- I know I need to provide a list of all the medications I take:

- | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Ask |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|

- If I receive a prescription(s), I can get it filled:

- | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Ask |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|

Follow-up

- I know if I need to have any follow-up and what I need to do.
 - Yes
 - No
 - Ask
- I have received written discharge instructions.
 - Yes
 - No
 - Ask

Other: _____

The following organizations can help you find resources to support your discharge from the hospital or your care at home:

Caregivers Nova Scotia

- › <http://caregiversns.org/>
- › Phone (toll-free): 1-877-488-7390
- › Email: info@CaregiversNS.org

211

- › www.ns.211.ca
- › Phone: 211
- › Email: help@ns.211.ca
- › Text: 21167
- › Live chat is available online
Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Continuing Care Coordinator

- A continuing care coordinator helps arrange for services you may need when you go home. Please read the pamphlet *Continuing Care: Important Information for You* for more information:

- › www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources/2120



Patient and Family Feedback (Patient Relations)

If you have a compliment or a concern, you can:

- Share it directly with your health care provider(s) or department manager.
- Contact Patient Relations:
 - › Phone (toll-free): 1-844-884-4177
- For more information, ask for a copy of the pamphlet *Your Rights and Responsibilities*, or visit:

- › www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources/0466



**What are your questions?
Please ask. We are here to help you.**

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here:
<https://library.nshealth.ca/Patients-Guides>

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

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