

# **COVID-19 and the Emergency Department**

*Messages to inform and encourage parents to call 9-1-1  
or visit the ED*



# Why now?

COVID-19 created many challenges and changes to various individuals and organizations. One of those entities – Emergency Departments (EDs) – faced an unexpected change: a decrease in pediatric patient volume. Although this change seems like it could be a positive, it is actually quite the opposite. Parents, guardians and caretakers avoided calling 9-1-1 or taking their child(ren) to the ED because of the risk of exposure to COVID-19. However, it is important to remind this population that the ED is still a safe option for their child(ren), especially when they could be potentially ill or injured.

To help remind parents, guardians and caretakers that EDs are still safe and there to help whenever necessary, this toolkit is filled with sample social media posts, graphics and newsletter templates for your use. Each piece of content can be edited or tailored to your specific organization as you see fit. You may use any of the content in this toolkit on any digital or written platform of your choosing. The information in this toolkit is Wisconsin-specific, so the statistics and guidance in the content may not be applicable to other states. If you have any questions, or would like additional content, please do not hesitate to reach out to Wisconsin EMSC Program Leader Erica Kane.

To learn more about ways your ED can improve your readiness to care for children, please visit the National Pediatric Readiness Toolkit: <https://bit.ly/2NciSOQ> . The Toolkit includes: an ED Pediatric Readiness Checklist, sample ED policies, guidelines for improving pediatric patient safety, and more.

# Sample Posts

**Post No. 1:** We understand that emergency departments can be scary, especially during #COVID-19. However, that shouldn't stop you from calling 9-1-1 or taking your child to the ED if they need urgent care! Some symptoms, such as difficulty breathing and high fevers, need urgent attention. *\*graphic 1\**

**Post No. 2:** The emergency department may look different during #COVID-19, but we are still here to help your child. We are masking up, wearing PPE and taking extra steps to ensure that your child receives the safest care possible. Visit our website: ([LINK](#)) to learn more about the extra steps we are taking.

**Post No. 3:** The Wisconsin Hospital Association wants to remind us of an important note: Hospitals and emergency departments are still safe despite #COVID-19. If your child is ill or injured and needs urgent care, calling 9-1-1 or taking them to the emergency department is still the best route to take. <https://bit.ly/3dkpvtg>

**Post No. 4:** It's not an easy decision to decide if your child needs to go to the emergency department. If your child is choking, has a burn, or has stopped breathing, it is best to call 9-1-1 to receive care as soon as possible. However, there are more symptoms to keep in mind when deciding if your child needs to go to the #ED. *\*graphic 2\**

**Post. No. 5:** You may be asking yourself if the emergency room is a safe place to take your child during COVID-19. Our answer: #YES! We are taking extra measures to ensure that your child receives safe care when needed. If you think your child needs emergency care, do not wait to have them seen by a health care professional!

**Post No. 6:** We are wearing #PPE in our #ED to make sure that our emergency department is safe and ready to provide the best care in emergency situations! *\*PPE graphic\**

**Post No. 7:** In 2018 there were over 52,000 pediatric ambulance runs in Wisconsin. Even during COVID-19, children are still facing emergencies that require immediate care from 9-1-1 or an emergency department. To help provide care for your child, we are taking extra steps to eliminate risks of contracting #COVID-19. *\*PPE graphic\**

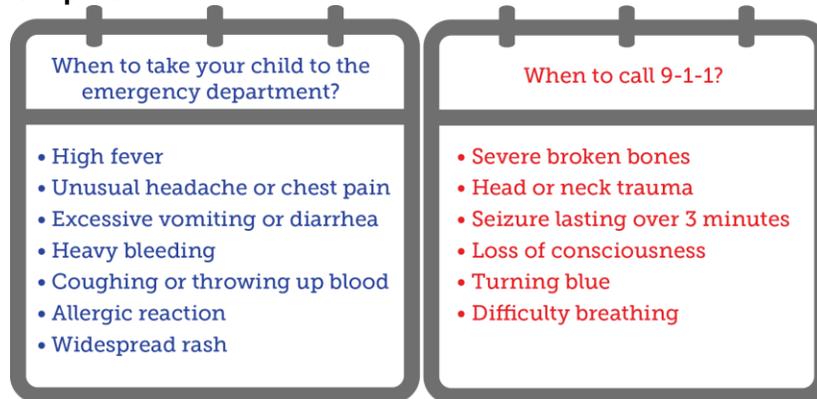
**Post No. 8:** We know that the emergency department (ED) can be overwhelming and stressful, and we want to help eliminate those feelings. The ED is #safe and ready to #help you and your family whenever you need it. Learn what to expect at the ED: <http://echokt.ca/covidemergency/>

# Graphics

Graphic 1



Graphic 2



These lists are just a few examples to help you decide.

(Recommended by the American Academy of Family Physicians).

Graphic 3



Taking extra steps  
to provide safe care

# Newsletter Templates

## Template 1

*Key Message: ED's are safe*

COVID-19 has brought many challenges into the lives of almost every individual. While many things changed – education moving to virtual format, work being done from home and events being cancelled – one thing has largely remained the same: emergency departments (EDs) are safe.

Emergencies can't be put on hold during a pandemic. Injuries still happen, and unforeseen circumstances still take place. Because of this, we have made it our top priority to ensure that our ED is safe and ready to treat any patient that we encounter.

"One trend we have seen due to COVID-19 is a decrease in children coming to the ED for emergency care," says NAME, TITLE. "A decrease in children entering the ED may seem like a positive change, but it isn't. Emergencies are still happening and injuries are still taking place, which means that some children may not be receiving emergency care when they need it because of the fear of coming in contact with COVID-19 in the ED."

Regardless of the day of the week or time of day, the ED is always a safe place for children to receive emergency care when they need it. Whether it's a broken bone or symptoms of an illness, the ED is safe and equipped to care for children.

Despite COVID-19, the ED is still a safe environment due to the extra precautions being taken. Staff are wearing masks, temperatures of all individuals are being taken, social distancing is taking place, and more. In the time of an emergency, the ED is one of the safest places for children to receive care.

"COVID-19 is scary, but in the case of an emergency calling 9-1-1 or taking your child to the ED is still the safest route to travel," says NAME. "Our ED environment is safe and ready to care for children at all times. We're always here to help, no matter what the situation is."

## Template 2

*Key Message: when to take child to ED/Call 9-1-1*

Your child is ill or injured, now what? Do you call 9-1-1 or do you take a drive to the emergency Department (ED). Even with COVID-19, receiving emergency care for your child is the best decision to make in the case of injury or illness but you may be asking yourself how to seek out that care.

### **9-1-1**

Calling 9-1-1 is the best option in emergency situations that require immediate assistance from first responders such as firefighters or emergency medical technicians (EMTs). By calling 9-1-1, your child can receive immediate assistance from trained professionals instead of having to wait to arrive at the nearest ED.

Situations that require immediate assistance are instances such as respiratory distress. Respiratory distress can be shown through symptoms such as difficulty breathing, inability to talk, turning blue or choking. Broken bones are also a common emergency that may require immediate attention, especially if the pain cannot be controlled or if the bone is visible. Trauma involving the head or neck also requires emergency care, as does a broken bone that has caused a child to lose consciousness.

In Wisconsin, EMS providers are protecting themselves and their patients by wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) which includes items such as face masks, gloves and eye protection. If you or your child have experienced COVID-19 symptoms, be sure to let the 9-1-1 dispatchers know so that EMS providers can be made aware of this before they arrive on scene.

### **Emergency Department**

If your child needs to see a medical professional but does not require immediate care through calling 9-1-1, taking them to the emergency department is the best option for them. Even during COVID-19, emergency departments are a safe place that is designed to help you and your family whenever needed.

Situations that call for a trip to the emergency department include things such as: allergic reaction, high fever, a wound that requires stitches, vomiting that does not stop or serious burns. It is important to note that this list is not comprehensive, and it is important to take your child to the ED whenever you are questioning an illness or injury.

# Resources for your ED

## **Wisconsin Emergency Medical Services for Children**

<https://www.chawisconsin.org/initiatives/emergency-care/emergency-medical-services-for-children/>

## **Guidelines for Care of Children in the ED Checklist**

[https://www.aap.org/en-us/Documents/Checklist-Guidelines\\_for\\_Care\\_of\\_Children.pdf](https://www.aap.org/en-us/Documents/Checklist-Guidelines_for_Care_of_Children.pdf)

## **Request Pediatric Comfort Kits, Weight Conversion Charts and Reference Cards**

<https://www.chawisconsin.org/initiatives/emergency-care/emsc-resource-request-form/>

## **Pediatric Safe Transport Handout (for ambulance transport)**

<http://www.chawisconsin.org/?wpdmdl=6378&ind=1608148651925>

## **Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children**

<https://www.chawisconsin.org/?wpdmdl=6830&ind=1612381152180>

## **COVID-19 Resources**

<https://emscimprovement.center/domains/preparedness/covid-19-coronavirus/>