



National Senior Games Association

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Humana®

For Minor Illnesses and Injuries, Urgent Care May Provide Quicker, More Affordable Alternative to Emergency Rooms

When people are sick or injured, many go straight to hospital emergency rooms (ER), where the average wait time is nearly an hour and average visit time is more than four hours.ⁱ

Depending on the health condition and situation, patients should consider going to one of the many urgent care centers located in their cities or towns, which are often faster, less expensive and more accessible, while providing personalized care.

At urgent care centers, wait times are usually less than 20 minutes, no appointments are necessary and parking is convenient.^{ii, iii} Most offer extended weekend and evening hours and some, like Humana's Concentra, can connect with a patient's primary physician to share information about the visit and create a greater continuum of care.

Going to the ER – or calling 911 – is the right course of action for life-threatening situations where patients exhibit severe symptoms or have a serious injury or illnesses, including head trauma, chest pain, loss of consciousness and severe burns. However, research shows up to half of ER visits usually don't require an ER.^{iv} Fortunately, urgent care centers provide quality service for common injuries and illnesses, such as ear infections, cuts requiring stitches, minor burns and most non-life-threatening problems.

Urgent care centers, which accept most insurance, Medicare and cash payments, can also provide a considerable service to patients' wallets. The cost for medical care at these centers is, on average, six times less than receiving the same care at an ER, according to the UCAOA.^v

In all, patients are encouraged to visit urgent care centers for timely and affordable care. Understanding the differences will help you make the right decision for you and your family.

ⁱ CDC: Wait Time for Treatment in Hospital Emergency Departments - <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db102.htm>

ⁱⁱ Kaiser Health News - <http://www.kaiserhealthnews.org/stories/2012/september/18/urgent-care-centers.aspx>

ⁱⁱⁱ Advisory Board Company - <http://www.advisory.com/Daily-Briefing/2012/12/04/Member-Asks>

^{iv} Centers for Disease Control & Prevention - http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhis/earlyrelease/emergency_room_use_january-june_2011.pdf

^v Urgent Care Association of America – 2010 Urgent Care Benchmarking Survey Results (no link available)

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