



Care Transitions: Emergency Room Use Education

There are many reasons why Members decide to use the ER for non-urgent conditions. These reasons may include but are not limited to; convenience, perceived condition severity, knowledge about alternatives, and lack of access or connectivity with providers. The first step in educating Members is to understand why they made the decision to go to the ER. From there, education can be tailored to the Member's specific concerns with the goal of preventing future unnecessary ER visits.

Step 1: With the Member, identify if the ER visit was appropriate.

Who To Call for Help

Every Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take your medications as ordered by your doctor(s). Review all new medicines, including over-the-counter medicines, with your primary care provider. • Go to all scheduled doctor appointments. • Call your primary care provider if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ You need to change your scheduled appointment date or time. ○ You have any changes in your health or if you feel ill. ○ You have any questions about your treatment plan or medicines. ○ You have recently visited an urgent care or emergency department/hospital.
Green Zone (Non-Urgent)	<p>Call your Primary Care Provider. You may need an appointment within the next 24 hours. Problems may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cold symptoms that are lasting a long time (this could include fever, runny nose, sore throat, or earache) • Backache that doesn't go away • Pain or burning when you urinate, or the frequent urge to urinate (these are symptoms of a urinary tract infection) • Simple cuts or scrapes, or tick bites
Yellow Zone (Urgent)	<p>Call your Primary Care Provider. Your provider will either make an urgent appointment or instruct you to go to an urgent care center. Problems may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple high blood sugars • Vision changes • Shortness of breath or increased cough • Harder for you to breathe when lying down, or you need to sleep with more pillows or in a chair • Feeling more tired or a lack of energy • Dizziness • Feeling uneasy, like something is not right • Increased swelling in your feet, ankles, or stomach • Minor injuries such as cuts, burns, or sprains
Red Zone (Emergency)	<p style="text-align: center;">EMERGENCY!!!</p> <p>Go to the <u>Emergency Room</u> or <u>call 911</u> if you have any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unrelieved chest pain • Struggling to breathe or unrelieved shortness of breath while sitting still • Sudden weakness or difficulty speaking • Severe uncontrolled pain, uncontrolled bleeding, or a loss of consciousness



Step 2: If the Member used the ER for a non-urgent condition, then help them understand why. Also, identify any next steps to help prevent future non-urgent ER use. Please see below for examples of how this may be documented in CareManager notes.

Convenience - Members may believe that going to the ER is easier than calling to schedule a primary care appointment.

"Care Coordinator spoke with Member who said that she went to the ER on Tuesday because she tore some ligaments in her right knee walking to the pharmacy. The emergency room doctor said to just wrap her knee in an ace bandage and elevate it. The doctor also told her that if it doesn't feel better in a week that she needs to follow up through orthro NY to see what they suggest. Care Coordinator suggested that next time she call her doctors office instead of going to the ER during the pandemic, Care Coordinator said that she is putting herself at a high risk of catching COVID-19."

Perceived condition severity - Members may not have the awareness of what constitutes an emergency.

"Writer called Member in order to follow up on a hixny alert that she received. Writer inquired what Member had gone to the ER for, as she had seen Member less than an hour ago at PROS. Member reported that she was feeling very weak. Writer educated her on the availability of same day sick appointments at her PCP as well as Urgent Care, so she exposes herself to less germs and is able to save time rather than going to the ER. Member reported that she was feeling weak and had not thought of that. Writer inquired if Member has yet been seen by someone at the ER. Member reported that she has not. Writer reported that she will be scheduling Member's transportation to her PCP appointment on the 7th this morning. Writer requested that Member keep her updated on her trip to the ER and their follow up recommendations. Member reported that she would do so."

Knowledge about alternatives - Members may believe that they will receive higher quality care from the ER.

"CC spoke with Member at her home. Member reported she went to the ER yesterday because she needed to get bloodwork done. CC reminded her that she could use the Samaritan outpatient lab to schedule a blood draw next time. The Member said that she was not aware of this and would keep it in mind for next time."

Lack of access or connectivity with providers - Members may visit the ER for a non-urgent reason if they are not satisfied with current providers.

"Care Coordinator followed up with Member after he went to the ER for tooth pain. The Member said that he left before being seen because the doctor was 'taking too long.' Member said he called his dentist last week but the next available appointment was three months out. He went on to say that the last time he went to the dentist, staff were rude and did not listen to his concerns. Care Coordinator provided the Member with the education that the ER should be utilized in times when he does not feel safe to wait for care and that usually dental offices can accommodate urgent dental needs. After discussing his concerns, he did agree to give this provider another chance. CC then called [dentist office] and explained the situation including the events that led up to the Member's ER visit. CC advocated for an earlier appointment to help prevent another non-urgent ER visit and was able to secure an appointment for the following day at 3pm. CC called the Member who was relieved to hear this news. Member was also reminded that if he decides that he's not happy with his dentist, then they can look for a new one."