

HOW YOU CAN HELP IN A MEDICAL EMERGENCY

MAKING THE CALL

1 Is This a Medical Emergency?

Call an ambulance if the patient has the following problems:

- Choking or trouble breathing
- A seizure/attack
- Won't respond or move when you talk to him/her
- Sudden or intense pain
- Heavy bleeding
- Severe or persistent vomiting or diarrhea
- Coughing or vomiting up blood
- Chest pain or pressure
- Neck or back injury
- Confusion or mental change
- Fainting
- Sudden dizziness, weakness or change in vision
- Patient is suicidal or homicidal

*If it's **life-threatening**, CALL 911 or your emergency number*

*If you're **not sure** whether it's an emergency, CALL 911 or your emergency number*



2 What to Tell the Emergency Dispatcher

When you call 911, your local emergency number or "0" for the operator:

- Describe the emergency; speak slowly and calmly
- Give your name and phone number
- Give exact location/address and nearby landmarks
- Give name, age and number of patient(s), if known
- Follow the dispatcher's instructions and answer his/her questions
- Don't hang up until you are told to
- Don't leave the scene until help arrives

3 What to Do While Waiting for the Ambulance to Arrive

What to do for the patient:

- Stay calm, keep patient calm
- Keep patient awake and warm
- Do not give the patient anything to eat or drink
- Do not move a victim who has been in a car accident, had a serious fall or has been found unconscious, unless he/she is in immediate danger
- Perform first aid if you are willing and able

What to do for the emergency responders:

- Light your location with a porch light, flare or bright cloth
- If possible, send someone to the street to flag down the ambulance
- Clear a route to the patient; move cars, furniture, plants, etc. if needed
- Close off pets from rescuers/put pets in another part of the house
- Gather or write down all the patient's medications and allergy information to give to first responders
- Gather the patient's medical history form
- Note the time:
 - When did you last talk to the patient?
 - How long has he/she had this medical problem?
 - If unconscious, how long has he/she been unconscious?
- Check if the patient has any advance directives (such as Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) orders)



What to do for yourself and your family:

- Arrange for children to stay with a friend or neighbor
- Pack a small bag for yourself
- Bring insurance cards and family/friends contact information
- Lock up the house, turn off appliances

This handout is brought to you by the American College of Emergency Physicians.