

Why am I asked questions multiple times?

Patients often remember important medical information when their stress decreases and when they are asked questions more than once.

Can my family visit me in the treatment area?

We believe that patients' families and friends are important to their well being. We encourage patients to have a loved one with them while they wait and during their treatment, if appropriate. Should additional family members or friends come to see the patient while he or she is in the ED, they may visit if the patient gives consent. For the patient's comfort, we may limit the number of loved ones who can be at the patient's bedside. No child under 14 years of age may visit a patient without permission from the ED charge nurse. We recognize the patient's family and friends as important members of the health care team, and we strive to keep them informed of the patient's progress.

Where do my family members wait if I have to have surgery?

If you need to have surgery, your family members will be escorted to the surgical waiting area.

Where can my loved ones get food or a drink?

In the waiting area there are vending machines as well as Au Bon Pain, a cafe that serves hot and cold drinks, soups, salads, sandwiches and bakery items.

Where are the bathrooms?

Public bathrooms are located throughout the ED, including the waiting area.

What happens after I'm treated?

After you are treated by ED staff, you will be discharged, admitted to the hospital or taken to a different facility. If you are discharged, you will be given instructions on how to care for yourself and given a number to call if you have continued problems. You may be told that you need follow-up treatment from your primary care physician. You are responsible for your own transportation home.

If your problem is more serious or requires special care, you may be admitted to Rhode Island Hospital.

What do I do if I need an interpreter?

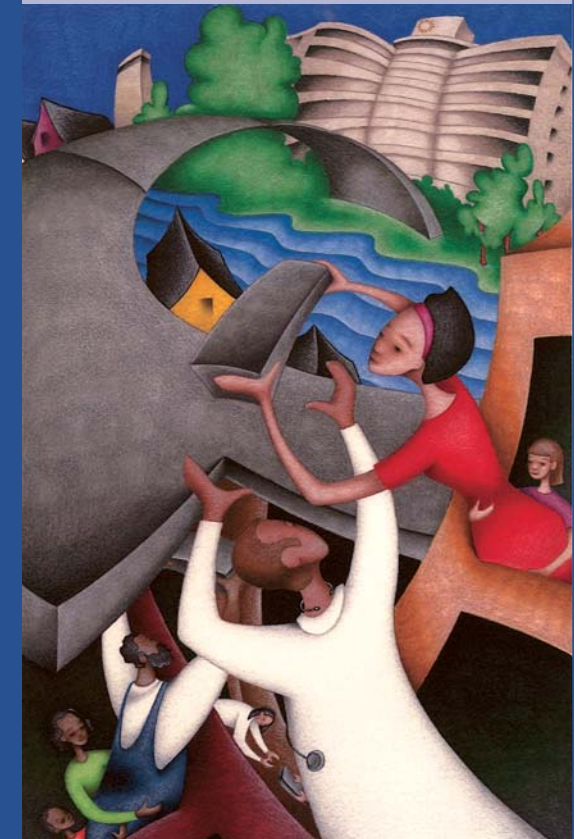
If you are non-English speaking, deaf or hard-of-hearing, and require an interpreter to communicate, please let a member of the ED staff know.

Tell us about your experience

At Rhode Island Hospital, we work hard to provide the highest quality emergency medical care. Please let us know if there is anything we can do to better your experience in the ED. We also encourage you to recognize any of our staff members who may have gone above and beyond to make your visit as comfortable as possible.

Emergency Department

What to expect at the emergency department



Rhode Island Hospital

A Lifespan Partner

593 Eddy Street
Providence, RI 02903



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What should I do when I arrive at the emergency department?

When you arrive at the emergency department (ED), please check in at the reception desk in the waiting area. A nurse will ask you for your name and date of birth, request a photo ID, ask you why you have come to the ED, and give you a paper ID band.

If a triage room is available, you will be assigned to one. Here, a registration clerk will verify your personal information, request a photo ID and insurance card, and give you a hospital ID band. Next, a triage nurse will collect your personal and medical history and check your vital signs, including your temperature, heart rate and blood pressure. The triage nurse will determine the severity of your condition, based on your symptoms.

Because the ED staff needs to be aware of your medical background, they will ask you many questions. Questions will often be asked by more than one ED staff member. To help the staff assess your condition and treat you, please tell them about:

- health problems you currently have or have had in the past
- prescribed and/or over-the-counter drugs you are taking
- any allergies you have
- recent trips you have taken outside of the United States
- if you are pregnant or breastfeeding

Why are some patients treated before others?

The triage system allows patients with life-threatening problems to be seen first. If you have a minor illness or injury, you may have to wait while sicker or more severely injured patients are treated first. We strive to provide high quality care to every patient as quickly as possible.

Why do I have to wait for treatment?

You may have to wait:

- while the sickest or most seriously injured patients are seen first.
- if other local hospitals are temporarily not accepting ambulances.
- for a specialist physician to speak with you about your condition.
- if a disaster occurs as we are the state's only Level I trauma center.
- if the hospital's beds are full and we are awaiting discharges, you may stay longer in the ED. We do have additional flexible space that we may use to care for patients.

Please keep in mind that an empty waiting room doesn't mean the ED staff is not busy treating patients. Patients who arrive by ambulance enter the emergency department through a different entrance, so it may appear as though there are not a lot of people receiving care when, in fact, there are.

Who will care for me?

As a patient in the ED, you will be cared for by a team of emergency medical staff including:

- an attending emergency physician who has overall responsibility for your care. A physician sees every patient. A physician assistant/nurse practitioner may also assess your condition.
- a resident physician, who works under the supervision of an attending physician.
- a registered nurse who will assess and monitor your condition, give you your medications and tell you and your family about any tests and procedures you may need. Your nurse will also give you discharge information if you do not need to be admitted to the hospital. Each nurse is responsible for several patients and works closely with the emergency physicians.
- a certified nurse assistant who works with your nurse and physician. Certified nurse assistants check your vital signs, draw blood, perform EKG's, bring you to testing areas and help make you as comfortable as possible.
- a social worker or case manager may also see you during your visit to the ED. They may help put you in touch with outside agencies for follow-up care.
- a family assistant/volunteer who will help visitors find you in the ED and provide them with directions to other areas of the hospital, if needed.

As a patient in the fast track, you will be cared for by:

- a physician assistant/nurse practitioner, who works under the supervision of an attending emergency physician.
- a registered nurse or a licensed practical nurse.

How long should I expect to be in the ED?

As mentioned before, a triage nurse will determine the seriousness of your condition, based on your symptoms. Patients with life-threatening conditions such as a stroke or heart attack are seen first. The length of your stay in the ED will depend on your symptoms, illness and whether you have to be admitted to the hospital. The length of your stay in the ED will also depend on the number of other patients receiving care in the ED. Also, if the emergency physician needs to consult with a specialist or if you have special tests and/or x-rays taken, your stay may be longer.

What happens when it's my turn to be treated?

An ED staff member will call you into a treatment room where you may be asked to put on hospital clothes. The ED staff member will check your condition, ask some questions, examine you and discuss your problem and any tests or treatments that may be necessary.