



Know Before You Go: Emergency Room vs. Urgent Care

Webinar tips

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Agenda

- Emergency department overuse
- Emergency care vs. urgent care
- Health care options with G.E.H.A
- The importance of a primary care physician
- Mental health emergency after care
- Tips
- Q&A



Understanding emergency department overuse

What is the role of the emergency department (ED)?

The ED is designed to treat serious, life-threatening conditions and provide urgent care when it's needed most.

What's the problem?

When people use the ED for non-emergency issues, it can lead to overcrowding, higher health care costs and fewer resources for those in real need.

Why does this happen?

Many people turn to the ED because they have trouble getting primary care or their care isn't well coordinated.

How can we fix it?

Reducing ED overuse takes teamwork — providers, health plans and patients all need to work together to find better solutions.

Source: [Yale Medicine](#)



Key statistics on ED overuse

Avoidable ED visits

About 30% of emergency department visits could be managed in primary or urgent care settings, reducing strain on ED resources.

Financial impact

ED visits cost two to five times more than similar visits to urgent or primary care, increasing health care expenses.

Care coordination challenges

When care isn't well coordinated, people often end up in the ED unnecessarily. This can lead to fragmented care and lower satisfaction.

Need for interventions

Using the right care setting and improving coordination can reduce unnecessary ED visits, lower costs and improve your overall experience.

Source: [National Committee for Quality Assurance](#)

Common causes of avoidable ED visits

Non-emergency medical issues

Minor infections, medication refills and chronic flare-ups often lead to unnecessary emergency department visits.

Limited primary care access

Lack of primary care access during off-hours drives patients to seek ED care.

Awareness of alternative care options

Many patients are unaware of urgent care or telemedicine as alternatives to emergency visits.

Level \$

1 Primary care office

Call first during business hours and check with your doctor after hours

Level \$\$

2 Urgent care

Use times when primary care provider is not available

Level \$\$\$\$

3 Emergency room

24x7 for EMERGENCY to use for life-threatening injuries or symptoms

Source: [Yale Medicine](#)

Emergency care vs. urgent care



Emergency room

- Chest pain, stroke, difficulty breathing
- Serious injuries, head trauma
- Life-threatening or disabling conditions

Urgent care

- Sprains, minor cuts, ear infections
- Coughs, sore throats, mild asthma
- Open nights/weekends

Source: [Yale Medicine](#)

Get to know your health care options with G.E.H.A



Nurse Advice Line

The 24-hour Nurse Advice Line connects you to nurses who can help evaluate symptoms and determine an appropriate method of treatment.



Telehealth visits for urgent care and behavioral health

MDLIVE provides access to doctors, including pediatricians, dermatologists and licensed behavioral health therapists by phone, secure video or app.¹



Primary care provider

The best place to go for non-emergency care. Treatment is based on knowledge of your medical history.

1. HDHP members who have met their deductible will be charged by MDLIVE, but G.E.H.A will reimburse the member 100% of the Plan Allowance.

Using nurse advice lines and telehealth

24/7 nurse advice lines

Nurse advice lines provide round-the-clock access to professionals who assess symptoms and guide appropriate care decisions.

Telehealth consultations

Telehealth enables remote consultations for non-emergency issues like colds, minor infections and medication inquiries.

Benefits of telehealth services

Using telehealth can prevent unnecessary ER visits, save time and provide peace of mind for patients.

Check health plan coverage

Always verify with your health plan for details on access and coverage of nurse advice lines and telehealth services.



MDLIVE telehealth covered conditions¹

Urgent care

- Acne
- Allergies
- Cold/Flu
- Constipation
- Cough
- Diarrhea
- Ear problems
- Fever
- Headache
- Insect bites
- Nausea/Vomiting
- Pink eye
- Rash
- Respiratory problems
- Sore throats
- Urinary problems/UTI
- Vaginitis

Behavioral health

- Addictions
- Bipolar disorders
- Child and adolescent issues
- Depression
- Eating disorders
- Gender identification
- Grief and loss
- Life changes
- Men's health
- Panic disorders
- Parenting
- Postpartum depression
- Relationship and marriage
- Stress
- Trauma and PTSD
- Women's health

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Source: [MDLIVE](#)



The importance of having a primary care physician

Your primary care doctor can:

- Treat common illnesses such as a cold or the flu
- Provide checkups, screenings and immunizations
- Test for all major health-related conditions including obesity, high blood pressure and diabetes
- Manage your prescriptions
- Monitor your health and establish baselines by doing annual labs and bloodwork.



Regular health exams and screenings can help find problems before they start or early when your chances for treatment and cure are better.

Source: [Mayo Clinic Health System](#)

Taking care of yourself after a mental health emergency

- Mental health challenges affect people of all ages and backgrounds. The NIMH-National Institute of Mental Health reports that in the United States, 18% of adults and 13%–20% of children struggle with their mental health. That's about one in five Americans living with a mental health condition.
- It's common for people to receive a mental health diagnosis during or after an emergency room (ER) visit or a hospital stay. Research shows that people who receive follow-up care are less likely to return to the ER, tend to feel better physically and emotionally, and are more likely to continue with therapy and/or medication.



The first 30 days after discharge are crucial for establishing a solid support system. If possible, try to see a mental health provider within seven days of leaving the ER or hospital.

Source: [National Institute of Mental Health](#)

Taking care of yourself after a mental health emergency

You're not alone — support is always available

- Help is available 24 hours a day through the [988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](#). Call or text [988](#) for free, confidential support. If you notice warning signs in yourself or someone you know, reach out to the 988 Lifeline or go to the ER for immediate evaluation and care.
- You can also find resources and help through the [National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\)](#). Your local [NAMI chapter](#) can offer guidance and direct you to mental health providers in your area.



nami.org

Smart tips for members



Save the Nurse Advice Line number and pre-register with **MDLIVE** so it's easy to access when needed.



Use the G.E.H.A **Find Care** tool to locate nearby urgent care centers.

geha.com/FindCare



Keep a list of your medications and allergies.



Know your nearest emergency room just in case.

G.E.H.A health members get 24/7 virtual access to doctors and behavioral health therapists.

**Be informed. Stay healthy.
Save time and money.**



G.E.H.A member resources

Nurse Advice Line
1-888-257-4342 (24/7)



Find Care tool
geha.com/FindCare

Member Services
geha.com/Contact



Elevate and Elevate Plus plans

- G.E.H.A Well-being Platform
- Learn more at geha.com/WellnessPays

High, Standard and HDHP plans

- G.E.H.A Well-being Platform
- Learn more at geha.com/HealthRewards

G.E.H.A website for benefit information geha.com

Questions?



The information contained herein is for informational and educational purposes only. This information is not a substitute for professional medical advice and if you have questions regarding a medical condition, regimen or treatment you should always seek the advice of a qualified health care provider. Never disregard or delay seeking medical advice from a qualified medical professional because of information you have read herein.

More questions?



Schedule a one-on-one with a
G.E.H.A FedViser benefits expert at
geha.com/MeetWithUs



**Scan the QR code to
schedule a one-on-one**

Chat with us



For more information

geha.com | geha.com/Blog

Q&A chat will go on through
1 p.m. Eastern time



Scan the QR code to
register for future events

Thank you

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This is a brief description of the features of Government Employees Health Association, Inc.'s health plans. Before making a final decision, please read the G.E.H.A Federal brochures which are available at geha.com/PlanBrochure. All benefits are subject to the definitions, limitations and exclusions set forth in the Federal brochures.