

Top 10 EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT Tips for Families

No one expects the next emergency to affect their loved ones. Here are some tips to keep your family safe and prepared:

- 1. Teach your children how (and when) to dial 9-1-1.**

Be sure to also teach them your home address and how to open any locked doors to allow access for paramedics. Did you know that cell phones can make emergency calls without requiring the owner's password? Learn how!
- 2. Find the time for you and your family to take a CPR course.**

In many cases, CPR will be the one true life-saving measure you can offer someone before the ambulance arrives. It really does make a difference.
- 3. Learn the basics of first aid.**

Keep a first aid kit at home and in your car. Simple techniques for cleaning, bandaging & splinting injuries will keep your child more comfortable while waiting to see a nurse or a doctor.
- 4. Remain calm and patient when visiting the Emergency Department (ED).**

We all know the ED can be a frightening and busy place & your child will be learning from *your* behaviour about how to react to *their* injury or illness. It's always useful to bring books, games or toys as tools for distraction. ED Staff will work hard to treat pain quickly and alleviate other symptoms when possible, but be prepared for sicker children or adults to be seen ahead of your child.
- 5. If your child has a serious allergy or medical condition, teach them how to manage their symptoms independently.**

Chronic conditions like asthma and diabetes are better controlled over the long term if you and your child are both familiar with how to use medications. Medic alert bracelets are also a good investment as they inform ED staff of your child's medical condition(s) when you can't be there to speak for them.
- 6. Keep all medications and household chemical products in safe locations.**

It's also helpful to keep the phone number for your local Poison Control Centre in an easily accessible location, like the fridge door. Young children can easily mistake pills for candy and sometimes it only takes one pill to kill. If you think your child has taken something, please remember to bring all the suspected bottles or containers to the ED.
- 7. Talk to your children about mental wellness.**

Be alert to the signs of depression, anxiety or change in mood. Get your primary care provider involved as early as possible and ask them about additional resources available in your community.
- 8. Promote healthy activities in your family.**

Healthy children & adults recover faster from the illnesses and injuries that bring them to the ED. It's important to balance "screen time" with physical exercise; this applies to both your children and YOU!
- 9. Be a safety role model to your children and promote injury prevention.**

A really big part of keeping your child out of the ED in the first place is to teach them to make smart decisions about preventing injuries before they happen. Choosing to always wear a seatbelt, a helmet, and a life jacket is a good start. And PLEASE don't text & drive - distraction is the #1 killer on the roads! These actions alone can save hundreds of lives across Canada EVERY year.
- 10. Vaccinate your children.**

There has been an unfortunate & unnecessary return of preventable diseases (e.g. measles, mumps, whooping cough) in Canada over the last few years. These illnesses always find a way into our EDs and our waiting rooms. Protect the very young & the very old in your community (who are the ones most at risk) by ensuring your children all get vaccinated. It's the right thing to do and, quite simply, it saves lives.

