



Healthy Aging in Neighborhoods of Diversity across the Life Span

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The Healthy Journey

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In Case of Emergency

Medical emergencies can be unexpected and stressful. Knowing what to expect in the emergency room can help you be more prepared. This Q&A with HANDLS nurse Jade Talmadge explains details about the emergency room.

Q: What is the difference between visiting the medical office, Urgent Care, or emergency room?

A: Regular medical visits are for routine and chronic medical conditions. These appointments are scheduled in advance. Urgent Care treats minor illnesses and injuries when you are unable to see your regular doctor or cannot wait. Emergency rooms treat urgent and severe conditions that may be life-threatening. Urgent Care services are open only during business hours; emergency rooms are always open. Some Urgent Care services may send patients to the emergency room if they can not provide the best level of care.

Do you need urgent care or emergency services?

Q: What types of health problems need to be treated in the emergency room?

A: There are many health problems that need to be treated in the emergency room such as stroke; heart attack; uncontrolled bleeding; trouble breathing; sudden confusion or disorientation; loss of consciousness; sudden paralysis or inability to walk, move, speak, or see; sudden or severe headache; seizures; overdoses; irregular heartbeat or palpitations; or sudden or severe pain.

Q: What types of health problems are better suited for an Urgent Care?

A: Minor illness and injuries can be treated in an Urgent Care. These include cold and flu-like symptoms; minor injuries such as sprains; sore throat; mild allergic reactions; minor cuts and wounds; and ear or eye infections.

Q: How do I know if I need to call an ambulance?

A: You or someone nearby should always call an ambulance if you are having an urgent situation that is

life-threatening, can become life-threatening on the way to the hospital, or can cause more harm if you are moved. This includes uncontrolled bleeding, stroke symptoms, severe chest pain, shortness of breath, serious head and neck injuries, and unresponsiveness.



Q: What should I bring to the emergency room?

A: Bring your photo ID and insurance cards to the emergency room. It helps to bring a list of your allergies, medications, and histories of major or chronic medical conditions and operations. It helps to bring a list of your allergies, medications, and histories of major or chronic medical conditions and operations. If you can, it may help to bring something to write down your questions or notes.

Q: How long do I wait in the emergency room?

A: It depends on many factors. Emergency rooms can be busy with long wait times and patients are treated in order of severity of their illness or injury.

Q: What happens once I arrive to the emergency room?

A: Here are the steps you will take:

- Step 1: Registration Check in at the front desk. You will provide your name, address, date of birth, and insurance information. If you are having a life-threatening illness or injury, you may be brought directly back into the ER and registration will occur once you are in the room.

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- **Step 2: Triage** A nurse will provide your initial assessment to determine the urgency for your required treatment. The nurse will gather information about the reason for your visit, your medical history, and current symptoms. The nurse will measure your vital signs (such as blood pressure and pulse). Patients are treated in order of urgency. This means that patients with the most life-threatening conditions are treated first.
- **Step 3: Assessment & testing** Once a room is available, you will be brought to a treatment area and assessed by a physician. Based on the history of your present illness and current symptoms, the physician may order tests to diagnose you. These tests can take time to complete and interpret, so be prepared to wait for the results.
- **Step 4: Treatment** The physician may provide treatment while in the emergency department. Treatment depends on your current symptoms and diagnostic results.
- **Step 5: Disposition** After the physician has assessed you and testing is completed, they will decide if you need to be admitted for further observation, testing, or treatment. If your condition is stable enough for outpatient care, you will be discharged.

Q: Is there any follow-up after I leave the emergency room?

A: Patients receive follow-up care instructions after they are discharged from the emergency room. The emergency room cannot always determine the cause of patients' symptoms. It can only rule out the immediate, severe, and life-threatening causes. Following up with a primary care provider or specialist is recommended after an emergency room visit.

Medical Emergencies at the MRVs

HANDLS is dedicated to your health and safety. This Q&A with HANDLS physician Dr. Ngozi Ezike explains how emergencies are handled at the MRVs.



Q: What happens if a participant has a medical emergency at the MRV?

A: HANDLS has a medical emergency response team. This team includes a physician, nurses, medical assistants, and a counselor. Team members have specific duties. During a medical emergency, the response team reports to the participant's location and uses equipment to perform medical resuscitation if needed. The physician decides if 911 should be called. The response team's goal is to stabilize the participant during an emergency.

Q: What happens if a participant needs to leave their MRV appointment due to a medical reason?

A: There are many reasons why a participant may need to leave their HANDLS appointment early. If an appointment is discontinued due to a health reason, it is rescheduled for another date. If a participant is having a medical event at the MRV, the physician decides whether the participant is stable enough to go home. If the participant goes home, the physician will follow up with the participant's healthcare provider. If the participant is not stable enough to go home, 911 is called to transport the participant to the nearest emergency room. Stable participants who need emergency room evaluation are driven to the nearest hospital with a HANDLS nurse.

Q: Why might a HANDLS participant need to go to an Urgent Care or to the emergency room during a HANDLS appointment?

A: Medical emergencies can stem from new or preexisting health conditions. Common conditions that can occur during a HANDLS visit that may require further evaluation include:

- Elevated or low blood pressure
- High or low blood sugar
- Intoxication or withdrawal of alcohol, opioids, and other substances

Q: What happens if a participant does not want to go to the emergency room, even though it was recommended?

A: Sometimes a participant may not wish to address their medical problem at an urgent care facility or emergency room. When this happens, HANDLS staff will explain why a participant needs further evaluation. It is important to identify the reasons why a participant does not want to go to an advanced clinical care center. HANDLS staff discuss these barriers with the participant, along with the benefits of treatment. If a participant objects to receiving further evaluation, they are offered an AMA (against medical advice) form to complete and sign.

Q: When can I come back to finish my HANDLS appointment if I had to leave early due to a medical reason?

A: Participants who leave the MRVs for medical reasons will be contacted by the community coordinator to reschedule their MRV appointment. A new appointment date will depend on the nature of their medical emergency and appointment availability.

Mental Health Emergencies

A mental health emergency is often called a “crisis.” During an emergency or crisis, it is important to get help right away. Anyone can have a mental health crisis, even people who have not been diagnosed with a mental health condition before. A person needs care if they are at risk of harming themselves or others, or unable to function or care for themselves. This Q&A with HANDLS licensed therapist Allison Udris shares resources for mental health emergencies.

Q: Who should I call if I am having a mental health emergency?

A: If you have a mental health provider, you should call them immediately if you are having a crisis. If you are having a crisis outside of business hours, cannot get in touch with your provider, or if you do not have a provider, you can call a crisis line, call 911, or go to the nearest emergency room. Always call 911 if you witness a drug or alcohol overdose. If you live in Maryland, you cannot be arrested, charged, or prosecuted for possession of a controlled substance, possession or use of drug paraphernalia, or providing alcohol to minors if you call 911 to report you witnessed an overdose. This is because you are protected by Maryland’s Good Samaritan Law. To learn more about the Good Samaritan Law, visit <https://health.maryland.gov/qahealth/substance-abuse/Pages/Good-Samaritan-Law.aspx>.

Q: Is there an urgent care for mental health concerns?

A: Sheppard Pratt’s Psychiatric Urgent Care provides psychiatric care and evaluation during walk-in hours. Psychiatric Urgent Care accepts Maryland Medicaid, Medicare, and private insurance. To learn more, visit <https://www.sheppardpratt.org/care-finder/psychiatric-urgent-care/>.

- Baltimore/Washington Campus Walk-In Hours Monday – Sunday, 10AM– 9PM. 7220 Discovery Drive, Elkridge, MD 21075; 410-938-5302
- Towson Campus Walk-In Hours Monday – Friday, 9AM– 9PM; Saturday 11AM–3PM. 6501 N. Charles Street, Baltimore, MD 21204; 410-938-5302

Q: Are there crisis lines I can contact during a mental health emergency?

A: There are several crisis lines you can contact 24/7. These are free of charge.

- 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: <https://988lifeline.org/>. Call or text 988. 988 is the new three-digit phone number that connects callers to the Suicide and Crisis Hotline. The lifeline is free and available 24/7.
- Maryland’s Helpline: <https://health.maryland.gov/bha/suicideprevention/Pages/maryland-crisis-hotline.aspx>. Call

211 (press 1). Formerly known as Maryland Crisis Hotline, Maryland’s Helpline offers free 24/7 crisis support to MD residents and may be able to refer to you to an ongoing provider.

- SAMHSA’s National Helpline: <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline>. 1-800-662-HELP (4357). The National Helpline is a confidential mental health and substance use treatment referral and information service.

Q: What happens after a mental health emergency?

A: After an emergency, is important to find a mental health provider for ongoing care. Ongoing treatment may help you prevent mental health emergencies in the future. Working with a mental health provider can help you with coping strategies, safety tools, and symptom management. For help finding a mental health provider:

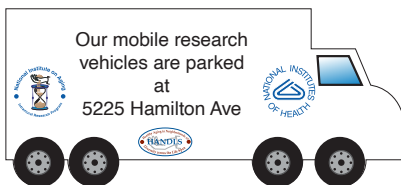
- Ask your primary care provider for a referral for a mental health provider.
- Contact your health insurance company for a list of in-network mental health providers.
- Pro Bono Counseling Project. The Pro Bono Counseling Project offers free therapy in Maryland. Licensed volunteer therapists are available to support individuals, couples, and families. Visit <https://probonocounseling.org/> or call 410-825-1001 (Monday-Friday, 8AM-4PM) for more information.

Introducing Jade Talmadge

HANDLS would like to introduce our newest team member, Jade Talmadge! Jade is a nurse at the MRVs. She has been a registered nurse for almost 5 years. Jade graduated from Towson University with a Bachelor’s degree in Nursing (BSN). Previously, Jade worked as a nurse in Emergency Departments at Mercy Medical Center and Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. At HANDLS, Jade will perform tests like the EKG, DEXA, medical history, bloodwork, vision, and physical performance. Jade looks forward to meeting you!



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Newsletter for the HANDLS community

The purpose of this study is to learn about changes in health over time. Using our medical research vehicles, we want to study as many people with different backgrounds as we can. We want this study to help us understand healthy aging by examining the influences of different backgrounds on changes in health over time. The information we gather will help improve health and prevent disabilities. Our goal is to gather information to improve health and prevent disabilities for people of all backgrounds, particularly in minority communities and communities with limited resources.

For information about our study call 877-677-9538 or visit our website <https://handls.nih.gov>.