

Always be ready for a trip to the ER

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(HealthDay)—Accidents happen, and being prepared for an emergency room visit could help speed treatment and reduce anxiety if the need occurs, an expert says.

The first step is determining which ER you want to use in the event of a sudden or [severe illness](#) or injury, said Dr. Susan Promes, chair of emergency medicine at Penn State Health Medical Center.

"You'll want to know what's available in your area, and what options they offer," Promes said in a Penn State Health news release.

A convenient location is important, but so are the capabilities of the emergency department and hospital.

"Every emergency department offers general emergency care. But are the doctors trained in the specialty of emergency medicine? If you have children, you may also want to know if there are physicians with additional training in pediatric emergency medicine," Promes said.

For your research, go to a hospital's website, click its [emergency department](#) link, and then click on the providers to see if they've had specialty training. The website should also provide information about whether the hospital is a trauma center equipped to stabilize and treat critical injuries, she noted.

When you arrive at the ER, you should have a list of all current medical conditions, medications and doses, and any known allergies.

"I'd even list any previous surgeries and their dates," Promes said. "It would also be helpful to know who your doctors are and what their phone numbers are in case the emergency [medicine](#) physician needs more information to provide the best care."

Keep this health information in a purse or wallet, or store it in a cell phone, she suggested.

Another recommended document to have ready, especially for [older adults](#), is a Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment form. "If you're critically ill, it's really important to be able to communicate what your wishes are," Promes said.

More information: The American College of Emergency Physicians explains [when to go to the ER](#).

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