



## Young and Old

### CALL EMS IN EMERGENCIES ONLY

- When you think someone is badly hurt or suddenly sick and in danger, call EMS immediately. EMS stands for emergency medical services. One call connects you with a whole emergency medical team—emergency dispatch operators, emergency medical technician, paramedics, physicians and nurses—who are specially trained to handle these situations.
- Call EMS when you think someone's life is threatened: when someone faints or collapses, has persistent chest pain or difficulty breathing or is badly injured.



If you are not sure if it is an emergency, *do* call EMS.

## **DON'T CALL EMS FOR NON-EMERGENCIES**

- Going to a doctor's appointment, getting a scraped knee bandaged or filling a prescription do not require professional EMS assistance. But calling EMS in non-emergencies does tie up the system and make it harder for EMS personnel to do their job-responding to serious emergencies.
- Again, if you're not sure if it's an emergency, *do* call EMS.

## **KNOW YOUR LOCAL EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

- You may know your local Emergency Medical Services as the ambulance service, the rescue squad, the fire department, the paramedics or 9-1-1. What's important is to know *how* to contact them for help.
- In communities that have a 9-1-1 system, simply dialing 9-1-1 in an emergency

connects you to EMS, the police and the fire department.

- Other areas have separate phone numbers to call for medical, police and fire emergencies. Find out what they are and keep the list of emergency numbers by your telephone. In an emergency, every second counts. Don't waste time looking for the correct phone number, have them handy.

## **WHEN TO CALL AN AMBULANCE**

When should you call an ambulance instead of driving to the emergency department? Ask yourself the following questions:

- Is the victim's condition life-threatening?
- Could the victim's conditions worsen and become life-threatening on the way to the hospital?
- Could moving the victim cause further injury?
- Does the victim need the skills or equipment of paramedics or emergency medical technicians?
- Would distance or traffic conditions

cause a delay in getting the victim to the hospital?

If the answer to any of these questions is "yes" or if you are unsure, it's best to call an ambulance. This is true even though you can sometimes get to the hospital faster by driving than by calling an ambulance.

Paramedics and emergency medical technicians communicate with the physician in the emergency department by radio. They are trained to begin medical treatment on the way to the hospital. This prevents and delay that could occur if the patient is driven to the emergency department. The ambulance can also alert the emergency department of the patient's condition in advance.

If you live in a community with a single emergency number, calling for help is easy. Just dial 9-1-1. If your community does not have the 9-1-1 emergency number, keep the numbers of the fire, police, and emergency medical services near your telephone. When you call for help, speak calmly and clearly. Give your name, the address, phone number,

location of victim (such as upstairs in the bedroom), and the nature of the problem. Don't hang up until the emergency operator tells you to. They may need additional information or need to give you instructions.

*Information on when to call an ambulance provided by the American College of Emergency Physicians*

## **KNOW WHAT TO SAY**

The information you give the emergency dispatch operator helps EMS help you.

Stay calm, speak clearly, and stay on the phone until the emergency operator tells you to hang up.

Tell the emergency dispatch operator **where** to find the person needing emergency care, **who** is hurt or sick, and **what** happened. The emergency operator will also need to know what condition the victim is in and if any help is being given.

Give the exact location of the emergency. Point out any landmarks-nearby intersections, bridges, buildings-that will

help the ambulance driver find you. And leave your name, address, and telephone number in case the emergency operator needs to get back in touch with you.

## **KNOW WHAT TO DO UNTIL HELP ARRIVES**

You've called for help. The ambulance is on the way. What do you do while you wait? If the emergency operator gives you specific instructions, remember them and carry them out. *Don't* move someone who is injured unless they are in danger. *Do* try to keep them as warm and comfortable as possible. If someone else is with you, send them to meet the ambulance. Make it easy for the ambulance driver to spot you by turning on a porch light or marking you location with a flare or bright cloth.