At some point, you may need emergency care. This brochure explains what the VA may be able to provide you. When it is not possible for you to go to a VA medical center, you should go to the nearest emergency room.

**IF YOU BELIEVE YOU ARE HAVING A LIFE THREATENING EMERGENCY, GO TO THE NEAREST EMERGENCY ROOM, EVEN IF IT IS NOT A VA FACILITY.**

When you go to a non-VA facility for services, you or a family member should tell staff that you are a Veteran.

Here is what you should know...

**What is an emergency?**
A medical emergency is an injury or sudden illness that is so severe that without immediate help, it puts your health or life at risk.

**How do I know if I am experiencing an emergency?**
Use your best judgment. If you believe your health or your life is in danger, you should immediately call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room.

**Should I call or visit the VA before I dial 911?**
No. You should immediately call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room.

**Do I need to notify the VA after an ambulance takes me to an emergency room, or when I am treated and released?**
Yes. You, your family, friends or hospital staff should contact the nearest VA as soon as possible. You generally have 72 hours to notify the VA in the event of admission. If you have an ER visit only and you are released, this period is extended to 15 days.

**If the doctor I see at a non-VA facility wants to admit me to the hospital, do I need to get advance approval from VA?**
If the admission is an emergency – NO, but prompt notification of the VA is necessary. If the admission is not an emergency – YES.
If a VA bed is available and I can safely be transferred, do I have to move?

No, but choosing to stay is at your own expense.

If I am admitted to a non-VA hospital as a result of an emergency, how much will VA pay?

This depends on your VA eligibility. The VA may pay all, some, or none of the charges. Ask your local VA's patient benefits counselor about what is allowed under non-VA emergency care programs for service connected and non-service connected conditions.

Will I have to pay for any part of my emergency care?

It is possible. Sometimes, co-pays are required based on your VA eligibility. Sometimes, federal law limits health care services reimbursable by the VA.

Will the VA pay for the ambulance and any possible emergency room charges if I leave the emergency room before being treated by a doctor?

If you leave the emergency room prior to being treated, the VA may not consider claims related to the visit. What this means is that you may be liable for some or all charges, to include the ambulance, regardless of your VA eligibility rating.

Does my enrollment in the VA health care system affect my eligibility for emergency care at VA expense?

Yes. Your local VA's benefits counselor can explain how enrollment (or other special status categories) affect your eligibility.

If I have other insurance (TRICARE, Medicare, Medicaid, Blue Cross, etc) will it affect whether claims for emergency services will be paid at VA expense?

It may. Your local VA benefits counselor can explain how other insurance can affect whether the VA can pay for your non-VA medical claims.

How long do I have to file a claim for reimbursement for emergency medical care?

In most cases, a time limit of 90 days applies. In every case, it is important that you file your claims as quickly as possible with your nearest VA. Contact your patient benefits counselor for information on timely filing requirements.

Will the VA pay for emergency care received outside the US?

VA will only pay for emergency care outside the US if the emergency is related to a service connected condition. For more information, contact the VA Health Administration Center at (877) 345-8179 or consult www4.va.gov/hac/fnbeneficiaries/fmp/fmp.asp.

Will the VA pay for emergency care if I am in jail?

No, Federal law prohibits the VA from paying for medical claims for incarcerated Veterans (or fugitive felons).

Know your options ahead of time. Contact us about your eligibility today!