

## NEWS RELEASE



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### **For Immediate Release**

#### **Halifax Regional Promotes Appropriate Use of the Emergency Department**

**Roanoke Rapids, NC (August 9, 2013)** – Open 24 hours a day, hospital Emergency Departments (ED) accept the responsibility of providing trauma and emergency services to those in immediate danger of losing their life or suffering significant and possibly permanent damage to their health. Hospital Emergency Departments fulfill a vital role in the community. Halifax Regional acknowledges that emergencies are unpredictable and can happen at any moment but wants to inform the community about being better prepared and knowledgeable about responsible use of the Emergency Department.

So what's an emergency? An emergency can be defined as any sudden and unexpected condition or worsening condition causing an immediate threat to your life, limbs, or sight and requires immediate medical treatment. When evaluating conditions that require immediate Emergency care, GO to the Emergency Department if you experience any of the following (list is provided as a guide only, when making a determination to visit the ED, use best judgment and err on the side of caution):

- Loss of consciousness
- Shortness of breath
- Heart attack or chest pain
- Bleeding that does not stop
- Poisoning
- Suicide attempt
- Drug overdose
- Major depression
- Stroke symptoms (trouble walking, trouble speaking or understanding, Paralysis or numbness of the face, arm or leg, Trouble with seeing in one or both eyes, Headache or dizziness)

Call 9-1-1 immediately or go to the nearest available ED, in the event of a life-threatening emergency. When time is essential, ED physicians, nurses, and clinical staff must focus their attention on patients with the greatest need; those dealing with a true medical emergencies.

Responsible use also means knowing when not to go to the Emergency Department. Utilizing Emergency Services for non-urgent symptoms or conditions is a misuse of the ED and contributes to rising health care costs. A 2010 Rand Corporation study published in the journal *Health Affairs* found between 13.7 percent and 27.1 percent of all emergency department visits are non-urgent, costing approximately \$4.4 billion in costs. The Emergency Department should not be used for primary care or for follow-up appointments.

You should not go to the Emergency Department for routine care or minor problems such as a cold or cough, sore throat, tooth ache, or prescription refills. These conditions can be treated effectively by your primary care physician or an Urgent Care specialist. In any situation, use your best judgment to determine the severity of the situation and the right course of action.

When contacting the Emergency Department to inquire about the condition of a friend or family member, ED staff are not permitted to give out any information about a patient's condition and will only confirm whether they are a patient or not. Federal law prohibits the release of any specific information regarding a patient's diagnosis and treatment.

Making the decision to go to the ED is usually a split second decision, but with a little knowledge you or your loved one can prevent an unnecessary ED visit; and guarantee those suffering life-threatening emergencies will receive the care they need when seconds count.

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**About Halifax Regional**

*Halifax Regional Medical Center is licensed for 204 beds, including psychiatric and nursery. A non-profit organization, Halifax Regional is fully accredited by the Joint Commission. For more information, visit [www.halifaxregional.org](http://www.halifaxregional.org).*