

Your guide to using emergency services



NETCARE
082911
24HR EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

There's one feeling that everyone experiences in an emergency – panic. The sheer magnitude of having to make decisions on the fly that can have life-or-death consequences can overwhelm anyone.

But what happens if you don't know whether the situation you're in calls for emergency services? What if that toe you stubbed feels like it's going to fall off, even if just for a moment?

How do you determine if you need to call emergency services? What happens if you don't use the Bestmed contracted emergency services? And what happens when you call emergency services when the situation doesn't really require it?

What is an emergency?

An emergency, in the simplest form, is when someone is severely injured or their life is threatened.

If the injury or illness is not life-threatening or may not cause permanent harm, you don't need to call an ambulance. A good rule of thumb is if a person can walk, talk and interact, the chances are that it's not a medical emergency.

While some injuries like light burns and small cuts might leave a scar, they still don't qualify as an emergency.

What to do in a real emergency?

The most important thing is to stay centred. While it may not always be possible to stay calm, it's essential to focus on what needs to be done and follow the proper procedures.

To report the emergency, dial the emergency services number. When the call is answered, say "I have an emergency". You'll then be asked to give your name and contact number, and whether assistance required is for you or another person.

Immediately say if it a life-threatening situation and be specific. Give your exact location and the physical address or location where the person who needs assistance can be found.

You'll then receive exact guidance on what to do, and if there is anything you need to do or prepare before the emergency services arrive.

Examples of real emergencies include:

- Major trauma: injuries from accidents
- Bleeding that does not stop after applying pressure for 15 minutes
- Wounds from firearms or weapons
- Severe burns
- Increasing effort or trouble breathing
- Smoke inhalation
- Choking
- Electrocution
- Poisoning
- Seizures that last more than two minutes, especially in someone with no prior history of seizures
- Loss of consciousness or unresponsive behaviour
- Heart attack symptoms: long-lasting chest pain and shortness of breath
- Stroke symptoms: slurred speech, confusion, weakness in part of the body, vision loss and sudden numbness
- Fever in a newborn or baby under 3 months (38°C or higher)
- High fever with a stiff neck or rash
- Head injury
- Severe abdominal pain
- Severe bone fractures
- Worsening chronic illness, such as asthma and diabetes
- Venomous bites

Who to contact in an emergency

Bestmed has contracted **Netcare 911** as our emergency services provider. You can reach Netcare 911 at:

Tel: 082 911

Email: customer.service@netcare.co.za (queries)

Remember: If you're unsure, it's always best to call your healthcare professional or the emergency services for advice before you request an ambulance.

What happens if you unnecessarily call out the emergency services?

If you call the emergency services for a non-emergency, you may be liable for the costs. It will be up to the treating emergency services provider to determine if the call was made unnecessarily.

Do you always have to use the Bestmed contracted emergency services provider?

Yes. While you may not always be the one to make the call to the emergency services, you may be liable for the costs incurred if you use a service provider other than Bestmed's contracted emergency service provider, Netcare 911.