VA HEALTH CARE | Defining EXCELLENCE in the 21st Century

Non-VA Emergency Care Fact Sheet

At some time in your life, you may need emergency care. This document explains what VA might be able to do for you. When it is not possible for you to go to a VA Medical Center, you should go to the nearest hospital that has an emergency room. If you are in an ambulance, the paramedics will usually take you to the closest emergency room.

What is an emergency?

A medical emergency is an injury or illness that is so severe that without immediate treatment, it threatens your life or health.

How do I know my situation is an emergency?

Your situation is an emergency if you believe your life or health is in danger.

If I believe my life or health is in danger, do I need to call the VA before I call for an ambulance or go to an emergency room?

No. Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room right away.

When should I contact the VA regarding an emergency room visit?

You, your family, friends or hospital staff should contact the nearest VA medical center as soon as possible, preferably within 72 hours of your emergency, so you are better aware of what services VA may or may not cover. Provide VA with information about your emergency and what services are being provided to you. Ask VA for guidance on what emergency charges may or may not be covered so you can plan accordingly.

If the doctor then wants to admit me to the hospital, must I obtain advance approval from the VA?

- If the admission is an emergency–**NO**, although prompt notification of the VA is necessary.
- If the admission is not an emergency–**YES**

If a VA bed is available and I can be safely transferred, do I have to move to the VA hospital?

YES. If you want VA to continue to pay for your care. If you refuse to be transferred, VA will not pay for any further care.

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

This depends on your VA eligibility. VA may pay all, some, or none of the charges. Some highlights are listed in the next column.

For service-connected conditions, here are some of the criteria that must be met:

1. Care or services were provided in a medical emergency, and
2. VA or another federal facility were not feasibly available, and
3. VA was notified within 72 hours of the admission.
4. Ask your local VA Medical Center's Non-VA (Fee) Care Office for further eligibility guidance.

For non-service-connected conditions, here are some of the criteria that must be met:

1. Veteran is enrolled in the VA Health Care System, and
2. Veteran has received health care services from VA within the previous 24 months, and
3. Veteran has no other health insurance coverage.
4. Ask your local VA Medical Center's Non-VA (Fee) Care Office for further eligibility guidance.

How do I know if I have a service-connected condition?

A service-connected condition refers to an illness or injury that was incurred in or aggravated by military service and has a rating assigned by the Veterans Benefits Administration.

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

File your claim with the nearest VA Medical Center quickly because time limits usually apply. For non-service-connected care, the time limit is 90 days. Again, consult your local VA Medical Center for more information.

Will VA pay for emergency care received outside the United States?

VA will only pay for emergency care outside the U.S. if your emergency is related to a service-connected condition. For more information about care provided outside the U.S., contact the Foreign Medical Program (FMP) at (877) 345-8179, or go to the FMP website at: *http://www.va.gov/hac/forbeneficiaries/fmp*

For more information on non-VA emergency care, visit *http://www.nonvacare.va.gov*