

Mayo Clinic Minute: When to seek emergency care

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When the COVID-19 pandemic began, the number of people seeking emergency care declined. A year later, emergency medicine physicians worry there are still some people who remain hesitant to go to the emergency department.

In this Mayo Clinic Minute, Dr. Casey Clements, an emergency medicine physician, discusses emergency care during the pandemic.

"I still think there's a segment of the population which isn't seeking care in the way that they did before COVID-19, and I worry about them," says Dr. Clements.

The threshold for when someone should seek emergency care hasn't changed.

"If somebody is having [chest pain](#); if they really can't catch their breath; if they're having signs or symptoms of a stroke, like weakness in one area of their body; certainly any sort of bleeding that might not be controlled, such as in your stool? those are all reasons to seek [emergency care](#). We need to

check those out," says Dr. Clements.

If someone is concerned that they may be having a [medical emergency](#), Dr. Clements suggests calling a nurse triage line to help choose the best way to get the care they need.

He says it's also important for people to catch up on any preventive care or screenings that may have been put off during the pandemic.

"I would encourage everybody to go get those screenings done and to do that preventive maintenance so you don't have to come see me in the [emergency department](#)."

The bottom line is the COVID-19 pandemic shouldn't keep people from seeking the care they need.

"If they're doing that through their family doctor, that's great. But if they need to be here, I want to make sure that they know that it's safe and appropriate to come in," says Dr. Clements.

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