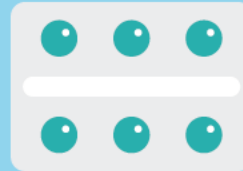
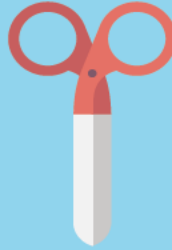


I NEED MEDICAL CARE, STAT!



Know when it's not an emergency.

BY NICOLE DUARTE

It's 7 p.m. And though you heroically survived tripping over a tennis ball just three hours ago, your ankle has now swollen to the size of that ball. You have a choice: tough it out until tomorrow when you can call your primary care provider (PCP) or get sweet relief now. It might seem like a trip to the emergency room (ER) is your next play, but when it's not life-threatening, an urgent care facility may be the best way to go.

Just remember, you have options. Here's our guide on navigating your care choices.

PRIMARY CARE PROVIDER (PCP)

Benefits: Your PCP is your starting point for your health care. PCPs coordinate specialty care, track your progress, and follow up with you on your recovery. They know your health history and are familiar with any underlying conditions you may have. Even if you get treatment from an urgent care facility or the ER, keep your PCP updated on your health issues.

Know how to reach your PCP after hours. Your PCP may be able to help you over the phone.

When to go: Visit your PCP for:

- Regular checkups.
- Cold or flu.
- Mild sprains.
- Tests or screenings.
- Earache.
- Vomiting, diarrhea, or stomach pain.

URGENT CARE FACILITY

Benefits: Urgent care centers are usually open after regular office hours, are staffed with physicians who specialize in acute illnesses and injuries, and often have shorter wait times than the ER. Plus, the average price tag of a visit to an urgent care facility is lower than a visit to the ER. Your out-of-pocket costs will depend on your plan.

How to find urgent care:

- Go to [hmsa.com](https://www.hmsa.com).
- Click Find a Doctor.
- Type “urgent care” in the search box and hit return.
- Use the filters to narrow the search results.

Tip: Find an urgent care facility in your area and make a note of it ahead of time. Keep the facility’s phone number with other important numbers.

When to go: Visit an urgent care facility when you can’t wait for your PCP or your PCP isn’t available to treat non-life-threatening conditions like:

- Fever, flu, or a cold.
- Bronchitis.
- Vomiting, diarrhea, or stomach pain.
- Ear infections.
- Cuts that aren’t deep, but may need stitches.
- Urinary tract infections.
- Animal or insect bites.
- Moderate asthma.
- Minor back pain.
- X-rays and lab tests.

EMERGENCY ROOM

Benefits: Emergency rooms have the personnel and equipment to care for the most severe trauma and life-threatening medical conditions.

Tip: Use the emergency room only for true medical emergencies to save time and money.

When to go:

- Allergic reactions to food (rash, itchy or swollen throat, etc.).
- Chest pains.
- Signs of stroke (slurred speech, severe headache, or weakness or numbness on one side of the body).
- Sudden changes in vision.
- Shooting pain in left arm.
- Vomiting or bleeding that won’t stop.
- Severe shortness of breath.
- Deep cuts or wounds.
- Severe head injuries.
- Vaginal bleeding with pregnancy.
- Seizures.
- Drug overdose.
- Unconsciousness.

OTHER CARE OPTIONS

HMSA’s Online Care

Have a question for a doctor or another health care provider? Check out HMSA’s Online Care®. It’s quick, easy, and secure. Consult with a medical professional 24 hours a day, seven days a week, from your home or on the go anywhere in Hawai‘i. All you need is a computer, tablet, or smartphone and an Internet connection.

For more information, go to [hmsaonlinecare.com](https://www.hmsaonlinecare.com). Register now, so you’ll be ready to log in when you need it.

CVS/minuteclinic®

Located in six Longs Drugs stores on O‘ahu, these mini clinics are open seven days a week and are staffed with nurse practitioners who participate with HMSA. They can diagnose and treat minor illnesses and injuries. 