



Healthy Kids

From our family to yours A publication of California Pacific Medical Center

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Reprinted Article

Top 10 Things to Know About Taking Your Child to the ER



First of its kind Pediatric ED to open at California Pacific ■ An interview with Thomas Peitz, M.D., chairman of the Department of Emergency Medicine and medical director of the Emergency Department



For pediatric emergencies, California Pacific's Pediatric Emergency Department (ED)—opening later this fall—will offer care tailored to meet the needs of children.

"Our Pediatric ED will be the first of its kind in San Francisco," says Julie Clayton, R.N., vice president of California Pacific's Women & Children's Center. "We will have Child Life staff to help support children and their families. Additionally, the Pediatric ED meets children's needs by providing child-friendly private rooms and equipment, and the absence of ill adults waiting for care which can be confusing and frightening to small children."

"If an emergency arises, parents can help take the anxiety out of an ED visit by planning ahead," says Thomas Peitz, M.D., medical director of the ED at California Pacific Medical Center.

Peitz offers the following "top 10" tips for parents and caregivers:

- 1. Choose a "child-friendly" emergency room.** California Pacific's Pediatric ED will have pediatric specialists on staff around the clock. In addition, its Child Life Specialists help keep children calm and comfortable during treatment. "By using teddy bears and other toys to show children what it's like to undergo procedures such as X-rays, we help children better understand and cope with the experience," says Peitz.
- 2. Try contacting your own physician first.** Parents should try to seek care from their child's pediatrician first, especially during normal business hours. "Your doctor can help determine whether the condition is a true emergency and provide medical advice," Peitz says.
- 3. Treat your child before heading to the emergency room.** Peitz recommends that parents treat their child's fever with Tylenol or ibuprofen. Or if the child is wounded, gently clean any wounds and apply direct pressure to stop the bleeding.
- 4. Stay calm.** If you have to take your child to the ED, try to remain calm for your child's sake. "Your child can pick up on your anxiety and become even more upset," Peitz explains.



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- 5. Prepare your child for what to expect.** Be honest with your child about what may happen, but use child-friendly terms. “If the child needs to get a shot, admit that it will hurt a bit,” he advises. “If you lie, you will lose credibility.”
- 6. Try to leave siblings at home.** It really helps if parents are able to focus on the needs of the sick child without interruptions from other children, Peitz explains. “Try swapping emergency babysitting responsibilities with a friend,” he suggests.
- 7. Bring your child’s medical history with you.** Provide the name of your regular doctor, a list of medications the child is taking, a record of vaccinations and a log of medical problems, especially as they pertain to the ED visit. “This speeds up the process once you arrive at the ED,” he says.
- 8. Help your child feel comfortable and safe.** Comfort toys, ‘blankies’ or books to read aloud can help take children’s focus off injuries or pain. If you bring snacks, be sure to ask the ED staff before feeding the child in case sedation or anesthesia is necessary.
- 9. Ask questions.** “If you’re not sure why your child needs to undergo a test or treatment, ask for an explanation,” Peitz says. Also, be sure to get a phone number for any questions once you get home.
- 10. Follow up.** “We always provide detailed discharge instructions—what to watch for, how to treat the child and when to seek follow-up care from the child’s regular

San Francisco’s First Pediatric Emergency Department to Open

California Pacific will open its Pediatric Emergency Department later this year, offering care for children from birth to age 18 for both life-threatening illnesses and other less serious conditions, including:

- Abdominal pain, dehydration, fever, croup, severe vomiting or diarrhea
- Asthma or seizures
- Broken bones, fractures, athletic or head injuries, or lacerations

Pediatric Emergency Department

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San Francisco, California
Tel. 415-600-4444
Call 911 for medical emergencies
www.cpmc.org/pediatrics

doctor,” Peitz notes. Records are automatically sent to physicians within the California Pacific system. Parents and outside doctors also can request a copy of all records. ★