TOOLKIT: REBUILDING TRUST IN THE COMMUNITY

ADVOCATING A RETURN TO
NECESSARY, IN-PERSON MEDICAL CARE

SCP HEALTH
TOGETHER, WE HEAL

Amid the pandemic, the number of non-COVID-19-related visits to hospitals, ERs, and urgent cares have dropped significantly in most areas of the United States. While some of these visits have been replaced by virtual care or have been rescheduled to a later date, many patients are avoiding even necessary, in-person medical care. They're hesitant to visit clinics or hospitals, have perhaps been misinformed, or have misunderstood the guidelines—leading to a widespread belief that contracting the COVID-19 virus or contributing at all to its spread has taken priority over all other health concerns and issues.

As a healthcare community, it is part of our job to spread the message that we are still here for our patients and are committed to their health and safety. It is critical that they understand that emergent and urgent care is still accessible and should be sought if they think they need it.

This toolkit provides resources for healthcare professionals, patients, and hospitals to rebuild that trust and help patients understand the availability and importance of necessary, in-person medical care.

Pieces included:

1. Tip Sheet for Healthcare Professionals: **How to Communicate the Importance of Seeking Medical Care**

2. Infographic for Patients: **Decision Tree for Seeking Medical Attention Amid COVID-19**

3. Social Media Posts for Hospital: **#hEReforyou**

HOW TO COMMUNICATE THE IMPORTANCE OF SEEKING MEDICAL CARE

Use this tip sheet to help your hospital leadership and staff effectively communicate to the community the importance of seeking necessary medical care, even during a pandemic.

TIP: SPREAD THE WORD, FAR AND WIDE

Tell as many people as you can how important it is to seek urgent medical care in order to prevent unnecessary pain, suffering, escalated illnesses, and even deaths. If you are a social media user, post on that. If you have a platform for communicating with social or religious groups, let them know. If you have a family or friend group text thread, share the word.

TIP: CALM FEARS AND PROVIDE REASSURANCE

Reassure your contacts and patients that you understand what they're going through, and that this situation feels like a "Catch-22." Let them know that though fear weighs heavy, it is critical that they seek medical care if they think they need it. They don't have to stay home and suffer through potentially life-changing (or even fatal) heart attacks, burns, pneumonia, neurological issues, appendicitis, or other serious concerns.

The hospital is there. The ER is there. The Urgent Care is there. Encourage them that the medical providers will always do their best to keep all patients as safe as possible, no matter the situation. Going out of the house right now may feel scary, but the effects of NOT seeking necessary medical care could be—and often are—much scarier.

TIP: BE READY TO ANSWER QUESTIONS

How do I know exactly what is serious enough to warrant an ER or Urgent Care visit? What if I have kids and I don't want to expose them to the COVID-19 virus? What if I live in a hotspot?

You may not have the perfect reply to any of these or the hundred other questions you could receive, but the bottom-line answer is: If someone or their family member needs medical treatment or has serious health concerns (mental or physical), get help. You can also share small tips such as: If it is an emergency, treat it as you would an emergency on any other day; If it is serious but not emergent and you're confident that you can safely wait an extra few minutes to visit the ER or Urgent Care, you could use telehealth visits or call a trusted medical provider for guidance on when and where to seek additional care.

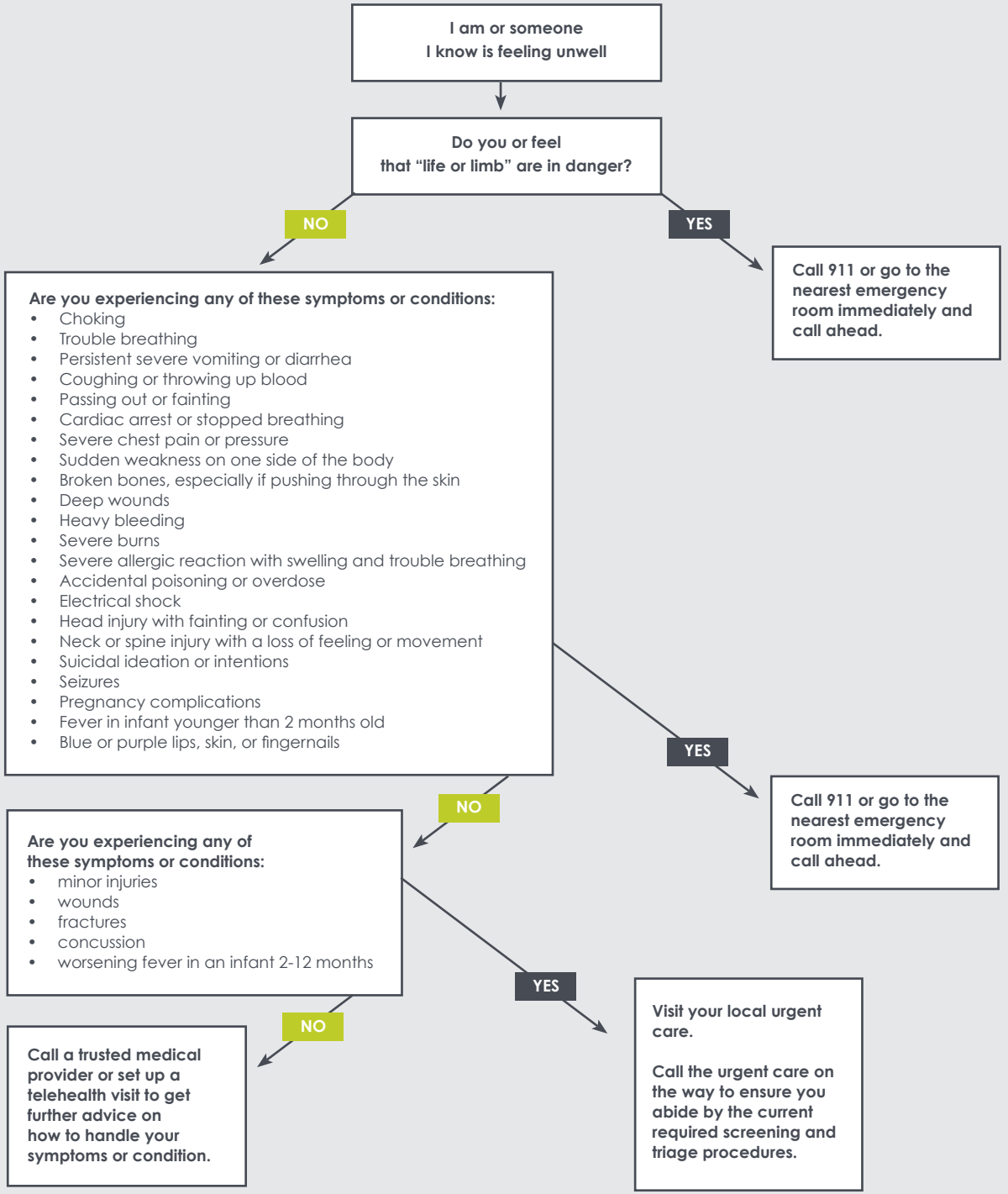
TIP: BE PREPARED WITH RESOURCES

Know what to recommend to your contacts or patients when having these conversations. Consider resources like the following:

- Memorial Hermann's list of typical ER and Urgent Care conditions
- Everyday Health's list of additional popular telehealth applications, many of which offer counseling, psychiatry, and other mental health services
- SCP's Decision Tree for Seeking Medical Attention Amid COVID-19
- The CDC's Self-Checker for decision-making

DECISION TREE FOR SEEKING MEDICAL ATTENTION AMID COVID-19

Even during COVID-19, under no circumstance should you avoid emergency rooms or wait to see a clinician if you feel that your symptoms are truly serious. This COVID-19 decision tree is not a replacement for your own knowledge of your body or your trusted medical provider's recommendation. Use it simply as a guide if you are unsure whether or not to visit the ER, urgent care, or use telehealth services.



#hEReforyou

Hospitals and healthcare professionals can use these suggested posts to remind their communities that, even in the midst of the pandemic, medical treatment for those in need is still available, accessible, and reasonable if people are concerned. Please note, "HOSPITALNAME" is simply a placeholder. Before posting this text to social media, replace it with the name of your facility or system.

POST A:
Need emergency care? Don't delay life-saving treatment.

As always, we're taking every precaution for patient safety. Whatever your emergency, HOSPITALNAME is ready to help.

#hEReforyou

POST B:
Concerns and fears surrounding COVID-19 have caused many patients to delay or avoid getting the care they need.

Please hear this: Our ER is open. Our urgent care is open.

#hEReforyou

POST C:
Accidents, heart attacks, and emergencies don't stop because of pandemics.

And neither do we. Our ER is open, safe, and ready to treat you—no matter what.

#hEReforyou

POST D:

REMINDER:

Emergencies and urgent health situations don't pause during pandemics.

Our ER and urgent care are still staffed with experienced medical providers who are ready to treat you when you need medical attention.

All of us at HOSPITALNAME are still prioritizing thorough safety measures in order to protect you and help you heal.
#hEReforyou

POST E:
We are thankful for the dedication of our communities to sheltering at home. However, stay-at-home recommendations should never cause you to delay much-needed care. Please visit the ER if you are experiencing symptoms that are a threat to your health, including:

- Chest pain
- Stroke signs, including sudden loss of vision, numbness or difficulty speaking; drooping face or loss of muscle control on one side of the body
- Loss of consciousness
- Severe trouble breathing
- Severe abdominal pain
- Coughing up or vomiting blood
- Urinary blockages
- Seizures/convulsions
- Pregnancy complications
- Suicidal thoughts or attempts

If you, or someone you know, experiences any of these signs, call 9-1-1 and get to the hospital right away!

#hEReforyou

POST F:
Serious health issues are often a greater threat to your health than COVID-19. If you are experiencing an emergency, do not hesitate: Dial 9-1-1 and get to the ER as quickly as possible, and call ahead.

#hEReforyou

POST G:
Not sure whether to go to the ER, urgent care, or get virtual health? If you're experiencing an emergency, always visit the ER or dial 9-1-1. For more support, download this decision-making tool.

#hEReforyou