

Health & Safety Tip #8

Use **Emergency Services** Wisely

In regional and community hospitals, emergency services are available 24 hours a day. In remote hospitals and some community health centres, VIHA also offers 24-hour emergency services, part of which may be on an on-call basis.

The triage system gives priority based on the emergency and urgent care requirements, which can result in increased delays for people who don't need urgent care. Triage nurses will try to provide patients with estimated wait times, but even these can change at a moment's notice.

While emergencies are unavoidable, here are a few simple things you can do to avoid unnecessary visits to the hospital.

- For non-urgent care, contact your family doctor.
- Familiarize yourself with the locations and hours of local walk-in clinics.
- Call Healthlink BC at **8-1-1** for confidential medically-approved health information and non-emergency advice, or visit: www.healthlinkbc.ca.
- Ensure your prescriptions are up to date, and make sure you have basic pharmaceuticals on hand to control children's fever and pain.
- Get a flu shot and wash your hands frequently to avoid spreading and contracting viruses and bacteria.
- Take basic safety precautions: Buckle up, don't drink and drive, don't leave open flames unattended, and keep alcohol and potential poisonous substances out of reach from children.

If you feel that you do require urgent medical attention do not hesitate to come to the Emergency Department or call **9-1-1**.

