

CarersBucks

Being Prepared for an Emergency

Life-threatening emergencies

Call 999 in a medical emergency.

This is when someone is seriously ill or injured and their life is at risk. Medical emergencies can include:

- loss of consciousness
- an acute confused state
- fits that are not stopping
- [chest pain](#)
- [breathing difficulties](#)
- severe bleeding that cannot be stopped
- [severe allergic reactions](#)
- severe [burns or scalds](#)

Call 999 immediately if you or someone else is having a [heart attack](#) or [stroke](#). Every second counts with these conditions.

Also call 999 if you think someone has had a major trauma, such as after a serious road traffic accident, a fall from height, or a serious [head injury](#).

If you're not sure what to do **NHS 111 can help**

Call 111 if you need urgent medical help or you're not sure what to do. They will ask questions about the symptoms so you get the help you need.

If you need to go to A&E, NHS 111 will book an arrival time. This might mean you spend less time in A&E. This also helps with social distancing.

You can also [get help from 111.nhs.uk](https://111.nhs.uk). It's available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

What happens when I call 999?

If it's a genuine emergency, where someone is seriously ill or injured and their life is at risk, call 999 and don't panic.

1. Answer the questions

Once you're connected to a call handler, you'll have to answer a series of questions to establish what's wrong, such as:

- Where are you (including the area or postcode)?
- What phone number are you calling from?
- What has happened?

This will allow the operator to determine the most appropriate response as quickly as possible.

Dialling 999 does not necessarily mean an ambulance will be dispatched. The call handler will decide what's appropriate. It may be safe enough for you to be seen elsewhere, or you can be given telephone advice by a medically trained clinical adviser. An ambulance will be sent if it's a life-threatening emergency.

2. Do not hang up yet

Wait for a response from the ambulance control room. They might have further questions for you, such as:

- What's the age, gender and medical history of the patient?
- Is the person awake or conscious and breathing?
- Is there any serious bleeding or chest pain?
- What is the injury and how did it happen?

The person handling your call will let you know when they have all the information they need. You might also be given instructions about how to give [first aid](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/first-aid) until the ambulance arrives. www.nhs.uk/conditions/first-aid.

Carers Bucks run information sessions on First Aid in collaboration with the British Red Cross. Find out more here: carersbucks.org/services/workshops-and-information-programme-2021, or call our office on 0300 777 2722.

How you can assist the ambulance crew

There are a number of things you can do to assist the ambulance service.

For example, stay calm and:

- if you're in the street, stay with the patient until help arrives
- call the ambulance service back if the patient's condition changes
- call the ambulance service back if your location changes
- if you're calling from home or work, ask someone to open the door and direct the paramedics to where they're needed
- lock away family pets
- if you can, write down the **patient's GP details and collect any medicine they're taking**. If you are at the casualty's home and have already prepared a Carers Bucks Emergency Plan, you will have consolidated this information and stored it in a safe place, such as in a 'Message in a Bottle' in their refrigerator.
- if you can, tell the paramedics about any **allergies** the patient has.
- inform them of the patient's **covid vaccination status**, including dates if known.

If appropriate, you may want to call the patient's GP. The GP may meet you at the A&E department, or call with important information about the patient.

Paperwork to consider having in place in case of emergency

The following two items are best prepared well in advance of any emergency. It can take some time to engage with solicitors if needed, and can take over 12 weeks for Lasting Powers of Attorney to be finalised. Call Carers Bucks on 0300 777 2722 for further advice if needed.

1. Has the person you care for prepared a Will?

See more on www.gov.uk/make-will.

2. Lasting Powers of Attorney (LPOA) for Health and Welfare, and LPOA for Finance

If there is a **Health and Welfare LPOA** in place, as their attorney you can make decisions relating to CPR and medical care on their behalf and in their best interests. You cannot insist on CPR being given, and if there's an Advance Decision to Refuse Treatment in place (see 4 below), this takes precedence.

If there is a **Finance LPOA** in place, you can support your loved one in making financial transactions on their behalf, eg pay their bills or care fees.

Medical Forms and Advance Decisions

If any of the following are in place and you can access a local copy at the time of the emergency, have them ready to show to the Paramedics when they arrive.

3. Do Not Resuscitate decisions

There may be a Do Not Attempt Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (DNACPR) decision in place for the person you care for. This means if their heart or breathing stops the healthcare team will not try to restart it. This form is kept in the patient's medical records, and may also be printed and kept at the patient's home. (More on DNACPR, who can put them in place and why: www.nhs.uk/conditions/do-not-attempt-cardiopulmonary-resuscitation-dnacpr-decisions/)

4. Advance Decisions to Refuse Treatment also known as a 'Living Will'

Additionally, your loved one may have put an [Advance Decision to Refuse Treatment \(ADRT\)](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/end-of-life-care/advance-decision-to-refuse-treatment/) in place. An ADRT explains to a doctor or medical team when someone wants to refuse CPR (or other treatments). This can include a decision about what treatment should be given in preference to a hospital admission. (More on Advance Decisions: www.nhs.uk/conditions/end-of-life-care/advance-decision-to-refuse-treatment/)

5. Advance Care Planning

At times of emergency, it is very reassuring if you and the person you care for have already discussed their wishes regarding their preferred place of care and choice of treatment. Having more certainty about what the patient might want can lighten the burden of decision-making in times of stress. Take a look at resources at chilterncompass.org.uk that can help you start this type of conversation well in advance

of any emergency, and keep a copy of this plan in a safe place for when it may be needed.

Carers Bucks Emergency Plan

Having an Emergency Plan can be helpful in highlighting what steps need to be taken if you need help unexpectedly.

The emergency plan helps you identify:

- Who you can contact in an emergency (family, neighbours, professionals)
- What type of support they can give you – both practical and emotional support
- How you support the person you care for and what their needs are, especially writing down any medication they take
- Important numbers: eg keysafe PIN, Care agency phone number, District Nurse, GP, out of hours teams, Social Worker details (if involved)

Having a written emergency plan has given many carers some reassurance about what steps can be taken in an emergency. Once you have a plan, you may wish to share this with the people you have identified as the emergency contacts, family and friends so that they are also aware of what to do or who to contact.

Being prepared for an Emergency Hospital Admission

During the pandemic, it has not always been possible for family members to accompany the person they care for to A&E, but the ambulance crew will advise what is possible at the time of admission.

If the patient will need **special assistance** because of a physical or mental disability then you should let staff know right away. The hospital may be able to call a Dementia specialist, Learning Disabilities Liaison, or member of their liaison psychiatry team, or provide any other assistance the person you care for may need.

General visiting restrictions are in place but there are exceptions for carers of those with dementia or significant communication difficulties. Speak to ward managers to discuss 'compassionate visiting' and any additional carer support the patient needs.

What to pack

Not every hospital admission results in an overnight stay, but you may have time to pack a named grab-bag to go with the patient into hospital. Suggested items include:

- ☐ **Medication (and repeat prescription list)** and the patient's GP's contact details
- ☐ **Mobile phone and charger**, and address book with important phone numbers
- ☐ **Contact details of patient's next of kin**, if other than yourself.
- ☐ **Your contact details noting that you are registered with Carers Bucks as the patient's unpaid carer.**
- ☐ 'This is me' information for patients with dementia (see www.alzheimers.org.uk/get-support/publications-factsheets/this-is-me)
- ☐ **Pyjamas**, socks and other day clothing, **including several changes of underwear**, dressing gown and slippers.

- ☐ **Personal care items including deodorant**, shampoo, soap, razor and shaving materials, comb or hairbrush, and sanitary items or incontinence pads if needed.
- ☐ **A toothbrush and toothpaste.**
- ☐ **Dentures, denture supplies or mouth guard if needed.**
- ☐ **Hearing aid.**
- ☐ Glasses or contact lenses. *Labelling items/cases with name and contact details can help if these are mislaid during the hospital stay.*
- ☐ Small hand towel.
- ☐ Sleep mask and earplugs.
- ☐ Snacks and change for the vending machine.
- ☐ Magazine, book or puzzles.
- ☐ Notebook and pen (useful for the patient to note names of professionals caring for them and what their roles are, plus details of any discussions with them).

Next Steps

Soon after the person you care for is admitted to hospital, you will also need to inform the following agencies:

- If the person you care for has a package of care in place, remember to inform any **care agency** that their client has been admitted to hospital so that unwanted support calls are cancelled.
- If they are in receipt of benefits, notify the **Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)** of their change of circumstances, e.g. admission to hospital or other place of care. Call Carers Bucks for the relevant helpline number to call if you need further signposting.

More information from the NHS

On the NHS.uk site www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/urgent-and-emergency-care-services:

- [When to call 999](#)
- [When to use 111](#)
- [When to go to A&E](#)
- [When to visit an urgent treatment centre \(walk-in centre or minor injury unit\)](#)

More support from Carers Bucks

Carers Bucks have a dedicated **Hospital Support team** who can help you with emotional support, information and advice when you or your loved one is in hospital. They can liaise with the NHS and social care team, supporting you throughout a hospital admission and the subsequent discharge process.

Call 0300 777 2722 for more information and a member of the Hospital team will be happy to support you. carersbucks.org/services/hospital-work

Sources used to compile this information sheet

www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/urgent-and-emergency-care-services
www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/urgent-and-emergency-care-services/when-to-call-999
www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/urgent-and-emergency-care-services/when-to-go-to-ae
www.nhs.uk/conditions/first-aid
www.alzheimers.org.uk
www.patient.info/news-and-features/what-to-keep-in-a-hospital-bag