

An Emergency or Not? Situations and Answer Key

Directions: Choose a few of these situations to read aloud to students. (Note: Situations #1, 2, 5, 6, and 8 are covered in the Beginner Reading Passage – Section 3. If students have already read that, choose Situations #3, 4, 7 and/or 9 below.) Ask students to decide what action to take. Ask students to explain their decisions. Below each box is an explanation of why the situation is to be considered an emergency or not. Encourage students to share this information with family members.

Situation #1

Sondra's 11-year-old son, Ted, was playing baseball. During the game, Ted was hit on the side of his head by a hard hit ball. Ted was hit just above his right ear. Ted fell to the ground and lay without moving. Sondra ran to Ted. Just as she reached him, Ted was starting to open his eyes and sit up. After a few minutes, a large bruise was forming at his temple. Although Ted was upset, Sondra immediately took Ted out of the game. After getting home, Ted was given two children's Tylenol and an ice pack for the side of his head. About 15 minutes later Ted was complaining of feeling very tired and wanting to go to sleep.

What should Sondra do? Is this an emergency? What would you do?

THIS IS AN EMERGENCY.

This is a classic description of an epidural hematoma. Usually, a brief loss of consciousness is followed by a lucid period that can last 15-45 minutes. Following this lucid period, the patient often falls into a coma and there is great risk of death or brain damage without quick medical treatment.

Situation #2

Tina went to wake up 3-year-old Dana. Tina was concerned that Dana wasn't already awake and playing with her toys. She found Dana sleeping quietly. However, when she touched Dana's forehead, it felt warm. She woke Dana up and took her temperature. Her temperature was 101.2 degrees. Dana complained that her head hurt and she was hot and tired. Tina made her a simple breakfast, but Dana didn't feel like eating. Tina gave Dana some juice and two children's Tylenol.

The following morning Dana's fever still had not broken and her temperature was 101.0 degrees. She was still tired, achy and not interested in playing with her toys.

What should Tina do? Is this an emergency? What would you do?

THIS IS NOT AN EMERGENCY.

Children run fevers. When to bring children with fevers into the Emergency Room: any infant under six months with a fever of 100.4 degrees or higher, children over six months with a fever of 104 degrees or higher for more than 24 hours. All other cases do not require emergency care and can be handled at home or with a visit to a health professional's office.

An Emergency or Not?: Answer Key, continued

Situation #3

Towanda noticed that for the last two days she was urinating more frequently and it burned slightly when she started. She didn't have any fever or chills, but she was worried that she was always going to the bathroom or feeling like she had to urinate. The burning was getting more painful and she noticed that her urine was a little cloudy when she looked in the toilet. The cloudiness upset her more than the painful burning.

What should Towanda do? Is this an emergency? What would you do?

THIS IS NOT AN EMERGENCY.

This is a urinary tract infection. They are more common in women than in men. Urinary tract infections require medical attention but are not considered emergencies. A patient should be seen by a health care professional. If it is a urinary tract infection, a patient will be prescribed antibiotics for 3-7 days. Treatment is important to prevent the infection from spreading to the kidneys.

Situation #4

Mr. Sanchez, 42 years old, took his wife and three children to Mexico to visit his parents. Mr. Sanchez only had two weeks for the trip so he wanted to get down to Mexico as quickly as possible. However, he lived in upper New York state and it was going to be a long car trip. He decided to drive 12-14 hours a day. Unfortunately, Mr. Sanchez is the only driver in his family.

At the end of the second day, Mr. Sanchez's right leg was feeling achy. He immediately went to sleep after they stopped for the night. In the middle of the third day, he found his right calf to be sore again. He tried stretching his right leg, but the pain did not stop. When they stopped for lunch, he noticed that his right shoe felt tight and he limped a little. Mrs. Sanchez was worried, but Mr. Sanchez told her it was probably nothing and didn't want to worry her.

What should Mr. or Mrs. Sanchez do? Is this an emergency? What would you do?

THIS IS AN EMERGENCY.

This pain may indicate a deep vein thrombosis (a clot in a deep vein, often in the leg). A clot can develop from long periods of sitting. The danger is that the clot can develop into a pulmonary embolism. This occurs when the clot in the leg breaks off and moves into the lung, blocking major blood vessels there. This can lead to sudden death. Mr. Sanchez needs to get immediate medical attention.

An Emergency or Not?: Answer Key, continued

Situation #5

Anthony is 34. He woke up at 4:30 a.m. feeling nauseous. He vomited and tried to get back to sleep. He noticed a small pain around his belly button. Anthony was not able to fall back to sleep, so he got out of bed and got ready for work. He was still feeling a little nauseous and didn't eat breakfast. During the morning at work, Anthony's stomach pain became worse. His pain was getting sharper and moving from around his belly button to the lower, right area of his stomach. However, Anthony had a lot of work to finish. He was also too nervous to leave work because he had missed five days of work when he had the flu two weeks ago.

What should Anthony do? Is this an emergency? What would you do?

THIS IS AN EMERGENCY.

It sounds like appendicitis, which is an infection in the appendix. When untreated, appendicitis can result in the appendix bursting. This can lead to serious complications, such as pus, bacteria, and cellular debris filling the abdominal cavity, and even death. People with a sudden onset of nausea, vomiting, fever and shifting abdominal pain that settles in the right lower area of the abdomen should seek medical attention immediately.

Situation #6

Ella's mother, Mrs. Jefferson, lives with Ella's family. Mrs. Jefferson is 58 years old. It was snowing one afternoon and Mrs. Jefferson thought she would surprise Ella by shoveling the snow.

In the middle of shoveling, Mrs. Jefferson found herself very short of breath and felt warm and sweaty, despite the cold weather. She tried to finish shoveling, but eventually stopped because she just didn't feel well. She went inside and sat on the couch. After 20 minutes, she was still short of breath, sweaty, and nauseous. She felt a slight ache in her jaw.

Ella came home and found her mother on the couch. Mrs. Jefferson didn't know what was happening.

What should Mrs. Jefferson do? What should Ella do? Is this an emergency? What would you do?

THIS IS AN EMERGENCY.

This is typical of a woman having a heart attack. Usually, you hear all about the crushing chest pain and pain radiating down the left arm. However, women more often experience shortness of breath that persists while at rest, sweating, nausea and an aching jaw. Prompt medical attention is needed.

An Emergency or Not?: Answer Key, continued

Situation #7

Jean, 25 years old, tripped and fell on the sidewalk outside where she works. She got up unhurt, and then realized that one of her front teeth had been knocked out. She found her tooth lying on the sidewalk and ran back into her office. She was bleeding, so she began rinsing her mouth with cold water. To make the bleeding stop, she pressed an ice cube wrapped in a towel where the tooth had been.

What should Jean do? Is this an emergency? What would you do?

THIS IS AN EMERGENCY.

The tooth should be put into a glass of milk. Then Jean should take the glass of milk to the dentist as soon as possible. The dentist may be able to fix the tooth.

Situation #8

James, age 40, and his 15-year-old-son had been playing baseball all day. James came home tired and realized that he had a lot of aches and pains from playing baseball. He had been home for two hours, but he was still feeling a dull, aching, tightening in his chest that was radiating to his left shoulder. His left arm was feeling numb. Then James began feeling nauseous.

What should James do? Is this an emergency? What would you do?

THIS IS AN EMERGENCY.

This is typical of a man having a heart attack. Prompt medical attention is needed.

An Emergency or Not?: Answer Key, continued

Situation #9

Mrs. Sanchez was taking digoxin, a prescription medication, for her congestive heart failure. She had been on digoxin for a few months and feeling much better.

Yesterday, after taking her medication, she felt very tired and out of breath. Mrs. Sanchez thought that perhaps medication would help, so she took more digoxin. A few hours later, she had trouble walking across the room without losing her breath, so she decided to take another digoxin. About 30 minutes later, she felt dizzy, like she wanted to vomit and had a yellowish haze in her vision. She also felt that her heart was beating very fast, then it slowed down and then her heart began beating very fast again.

What should Mrs. Sanchez do? Is this an emergency? What would you do?

THIS IS AN EMERGENCY.

Mrs. Sanchez took too much digoxin. Digoxin is a heart medication that affects the rate at which the heart beats. It must be carefully monitored and controlled. An overdose of digoxin can result in fatal heart rhythms. Talk to your health professional about medication. Never take more medication than what you are told to take or the directions tell you to take.
