

When to Refer to ED and Who to Call for Acute Care Advice

- HR >110, SPO2 consistently \leq 92%, RR >24
- Severe shortness of breath at rest (e.g. Breathlessness RR >30 despite normal O2 sats)
- Difficulty in breathing (work of breathing)
- Reducing O2 saturation (see guidance under Examination/Assessing Vital Signs on this page)
- Pain or pressure in chest
- Decreased oral intake or urine output (dehydrated, needing IV fluids)
- Cold, clammy or pale mottled skin
- New onset of confusion, becoming difficult to rouse, syncope
- Blue lips or face
- Coughing up blood

Other symptoms indicating severe illness, or significant or rapid deterioration including markedly increased fatigue if O2 Sats are not available.

The patients risk factors for more severe illness should be considered in making the decision to refer to ED: age (>65), comorbidities as above, immunocompromised, higher frailty score. In addition inability to self-isolate or lack of support at home may be other reasons to consider ED referral.

* see [Managing Progressive Life Limiting Conditions](#) (COVID and non COVID)

For patients who are COVID+ that you may have questions about their acute care or potential need to transfer to ED. SJHH and HHS have offered the following specific support:

- At SJHH: an Emergency Physician at SJHH is available daily from 4-5 to provide any advice and support needed. To contact this physician, call the SJHH ED at 905-522-1155 x 32043 and a clerk will provide the contact number to connect directly with the ED physician covering that day
- At Hamilton Health Sciences: Family Physicians can reach out to the on-call physician for the Connected Health Hamilton program at HHS by calling the Virtual Command Centre 7 days a week at: 905 577 1409. The VCC nurse will then take the contact details of the Family Medicine doctor and will convey the message to the on-call doctor during their daily check-in (usually between 1pm-2pm unless they have a conflict). The on-call doctor will call the Family Physician directly to discuss any issues /provide support.

Access to [COVID-19 specific econsults for specialist advice](#) is available through OTN for **Infectious Diseases, Vaccine - Public Health, Vaccine - Allergy/Immunology, Autoimmune Disorders and Pregnancy**