
Calling an ambulance

Summary

- Call triple zero (000) for an ambulance in a medical emergency.
 - Call 106 for the National Relay Emergency Call Service for text-based communication over the phone.
 - Calls to triple zero (000) are free.
 - You can call triple zero (000) even if you do not have any credit on your phone.
 - When you call, stay calm and speak slowly.
 - If you cannot speak English and need an interpreter, tell the person on the phone and they will get an interpreter for you.
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In a medical emergency, calling for an ambulance could mean the difference between life and death. However, people sometimes hesitate to call because they are not sure if the situation qualifies as an emergency. If in doubt, always call triple zero (000). The people who take your call are trained to help you and will direct you to the appropriate resources.

Recognising a medical emergency

An immediate life-threatening emergency needing an ambulance may include:

- chest pain or chest tightness
- sudden numbness or paralysis of the face, arm or leg
- large burns
- serious accidents or trauma
- severe bleeding
- difficulty breathing
- extreme pain
- unconsciousness.

How to call an ambulance

If you or the person you are caring for needs immediate surgery or life-saving medical assistance, call triple zero (000) and ask for an ambulance to get emergency help as soon as possible, for a greater chance of recovery.

You should:

- ask someone else to make the call if you are providing first aid to the injured person
- call out for help if you are by yourself
- briefly leave the sick or injured person to call for an ambulance if no one responds to your call for help
- try not to panic. Talk slowly and clearly so the operator can understand you.

When you call an ambulance

When you call triple zero (000), you will be asked which service you require (ambulance, police or fire rescue). Tell the operator that you need an ambulance. They will transfer you to an ambulance call-taker.

Give your phone number and the address where the injured or sick person is. If you are located on a country property, you will need to know your property fire map reference, or VicRoads map reference.

Describe the problem and what has happened, how many people are involved, the injured person's age and gender, and if they are conscious or breathing.

Depending on how serious the problem is, the operator may send an ambulance while you are talking on the phone, even though you may not hear them do this. Keep answering their questions as this will help prepare the paramedics while they are on their way.

The operator may give you first aid instructions over the phone. Do not hang up until the phone operator tells you to.

Be prepared for when the ambulance arrives. If someone else is with you, have them wait outside to flag down the ambulance and make sure outside lights are on and doors are unlocked so they can access your house.

Interpreters for calls to triple zero (000)

If you do not speak English or prefer to speak in your native language, you can ask the operator for an interpreter. There will be a short wait while they get an interpreter on the phone to speak to you.

It is useful to know some words in English, such as your address and phone number. Being able to use accurate words in English such as 'unconscious', 'not breathing' and 'bleeding' can help the operator to get an ambulance to you quickly while waiting for the interpreter.

Emergency number 112 for mobile phones

The standard emergency number on the Global System of Mobile Communications (GSM) network is 112 and can only be called from a digital mobile phone. If you call 112 anywhere in the world that has GSM coverage, you will be connected to that country's emergency service.

Calling triple zero (000) when you cannot speak

If you call triple zero (000), but cannot speak or make any sounds, the operator will ask you to dial 55. Police will either try to call you back or will visit the address you are calling from to see if you need help. If you do not dial 55 when asked, the operator will hang up. This system prevents accidental calls to triple zero (000).

Calls to triple zero (000) for people with speech or hearing impairments

If you have a speech or hearing impairment and use a telephone typewriter (TTY), computer or modem to make telephone calls, you can call for an ambulance by dialling 106. This puts you through to the text-based National Relay Emergency Call Service. The operator who answers your call will relay your typed information to the ambulance operator (or police or fire services).

If it is not an emergency

For non-urgent care or patient transport, contact your local doctor, arrange for a home visit, or call a health advice helpline such as NURSE-ON-CALL.

Ambulance paramedics cannot prescribe medication. Your local doctor is the best person to treat non-urgent medical conditions.

Learn first aid

It is strongly recommended that you take a first aid course. People who have taken a course can use their first aid knowledge to help in an emergency and even save lives until medical help arrives. For more information on first aid courses, contact St John Ambulance Australia or any first aid services organisation.

Ambulance costs

The cost of ambulance transport, including Non Emergency Patient Transport (NEPT), is not covered by Medicare. There are a number of ways to cover the costs of ambulance and non-emergency patient transport.

These include:

- ambulance membership subscription
- some private health insurance
- as a current health care or pension card holder
- as a Department of Veterans Affairs card holder.

See the [Department of Health and Human Services website](#) for ambulance cover information.

Where to get help

- Ambulance Victoria – for first aid courses and kits, call 1800 248 859
- St John Ambulance Victoria – for first aid courses and kits, call 1300 360 455 or (03) 8588 8588

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