



Sonoma West Medical Center

Emergency Room or Urgent Care?

The right choice could save your life.

BY: JANE ROGAN

It was 8 A.M. I walked through the double doors into the hospital and was immediately put on alert. A baby's cries were coming from the Emergency Department. The baby had been brought to the ED by his parents just minutes before; his face was blue; his breathing was labored. A group of doctors and nurses were working on stabilizing the infant, while administrators were preparing paperwork for the emergency transfer to Children's Hospital in Oakland. Soon the REACH helicopter landed and the baby was taken swiftly to Children's. A few hours later we learned he had received treatment for a severe respiratory virus and was stable. Three days later his mother brought him in to thank the staff personally, and to share her rosy cheeked baby boy's recovery with us.

This story illustrates just one of the reasons why an acute care hospital with a 24/7 Emergency Department reopened in West Sonoma County. Minutes matter when it is a life or death emergency.

Sonoma County is fortunate to boast of a robust ecosystem of healthcare options, but it is not always easy to know which option is the appropriate level of care in any given situation.

When does a parent make an appointment with the family doctor, or Primary Care Physician, as opposed to taking potentially quicker action at either an Urgent Care Center or the Emergency Department in an acute care hospital?

Here are some general tips for choosing between urgent care and emergency care. When you can wait a day or two for treatment, the best course of action is always to see your family doctor. Your doctor knows your health history, and can determine treatment efficiently. Chances are going to your PCP will also be the least costly choice, depending upon your insurance.

If you cannot get a same-day appointment with your PCP, an urgent care center may be the right choice. Urgent care centers are an important and integral part of our healthcare ecosystem, and there are plenty of times when they are the appropriate place to go.

Likewise, when it's time to go to the ER, minutes matter and the situation is critical. If you are in doubt, get emergency care. Emergency departments are mandated to care for patients who ask for treatment. However, it is good to know the important differences between urgent and emergent care levels:

Level of Care	Urgent	
	Emergency	Care
<i>Ambulance stop</i>	Yes	No
<i>Helicopter</i>	Yes*	No
<i>Patient Overnight</i>	Yes**	No
<i>Stroke Stabilization</i>	Yes	No
<i>Sprain</i>	Yes	Yes
<i>UTI</i>	Yes	Yes
<i>Sore Throat</i>	Yes	Yes
<i>Mild Asthma</i>	Yes	Yes

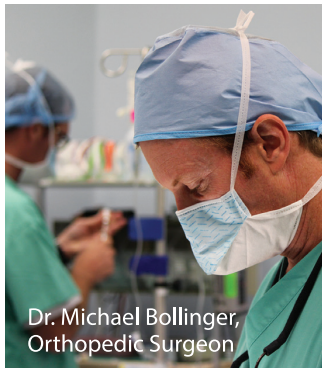
*Helipad on site
**ED may admit patient to the hospital for treatment

When you need emergency care, you don't want to be miles away from the nearest treatment team. SWMC has the closest Emergency Department to our neighbors in Bodega Bay. The hospital had only been opened two days when we received an ambulance from Bodega Bay. The patient was admitted to emergent surgery and his life was saved.

Every day we witness incidents that tell us our hard work to open and sustain this hospital's acute care system is worth it. Our patients' healing experiences mean everything to those of us who have chosen to work in healthcare.



If you are considering surgery, be sure to consider your surgeon.



Dr. Michael Bollinger,
Orthopedic Surgeon

Dr. Michael Bollinger uses techniques to reduce trauma to a patient's soft tissue (a leading cause of post-surgical infection). This meticulous approach to his work, emphasizing quality over quantity, is a fundamental part of Dr. Bollinger's surgical philosophy.

Dr. Bollinger prefers Sonoma West Medical Center because he knows his patients will receive the same, meticulous attention to their care in the welcoming private rooms with fresh, quality food that is locally sourced. It all leads to routine, successful outcomes.

Dr. Michael Bollinger and Sonoma West Medical Center – We're Here for You.

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