Medical problem? **Call healthdirect** on **1800 022 222**.If you need urgent medical help, call triple zero (000) immediately.
healthdirect is a free service where you can talk to a nurse or doctor who can help you know what to do.

About ambulances in Australia

Key facts

- An ambulance is a vehicle equipped for urgently taking sick or injured people to hospital.
- There are many types of ambulance, all with special equipment.
- Paramedics are first responders, who know how to stabilise people and get them to hospital quickly.
- Medicare does not cover the cost of ambulance services.
- The cost of calling an ambulance varies between states and territories.

On this page

- What is an ambulance?
- When should I call an ambulance?
- What happens when I call an ambulance?
- Will I always be taken to a hospital?
- What to expect when I am being transported in an ambulance?
- Who works in an ambulance?

↓ What is the cost of an ambulance?
↓ Are there other medical and non-emergency transport schemes?
↓ Resources and Support

What is an ambulance?

Call Triple Zero (000) if you need urgent medical help.

Ambulances are vehicles that transport people needing urgent medical care to hospital.

There are many types of ambulance, all specially equipped. They include:

- vans
- motorbikes
- cycle response bikes
- buses
- aeroplanes and helicopters
- rescue trucks

Vans

The van is the most common type of ambulance vehicle across Australia. These are used by advanced care paramedics for medical emergencies. They are also used by patient transport officers for non-emergency situations.

Motorbikes

Ambulance motorbikes can move through traffic quickly, to reach sick or injured people sooner. They are not used to carry passengers.

Cycle response bikes

Ambulance mountain bikes are sometimes used at events. They're used by specially trained health staff to quickly respond to incidents.

Buses

Ambulance buses are used at events or for patient transport. Ambulance buses can carry up to 12 people, some seated and some on stretchers.

Aeroplanes and helicopters

Air ambulances offer medical care and transport for people living in remote areas. The Royal Flying Doctor Service work in partnership with many state ambulance services.

Helicopters are used for patient retrieval (getting them back from somewhere) and to move high-needs patients between hospitals.

Rescue trucks

Specialised vehicles, known as ambulance rescue trucks, carry equipment for difficult rescue situations.

When should I call an ambulance?

You should call triple zero (000) and ask for an ambulance when you need urgent medical help.

Examples of times when you may need an ambulance are:

- injury from a car crash
- falling from a height
- stabbing or shooting
- severe burns
- heavy bleeding

Examples of health crises that may need an ambulance are:

- heart attack, chest pain or chest tightness
- sudden weakness or numbness of your face, arm or leg
- breathing difficulties
- loss of consciousness or collapse
- seizure

What should I do if it is not an emergency?

If you need healthcare, but it's not life threatening, you can:

- speak with a pharmacist
- visit your doctor
- visit an urgent care clinic
- call healthdirect on 1800 022 222 (known as Nurse-on-Call in Victoria) for advice from a registered nurse

What happens when I call an ambulance?

The person who answers your triple zero (000) call is called the operator. They will ask if you need:

- ambulance
- fire
- police

They will ask you questions about where you are and what has happened. It's important to speak clearly.

Once the operator knows what has happened, they will organise a suitable service. Paramedics will be sent if you need urgent medical treatment.

It is important that you stay on the phone unless the operator tells you to hang up. Follow the operator's advice while you wait for the ambulance to arrive.

If the call is not an emergency, the operator may transfer your call to a healthdirect registered nurse. They will give you with help over the phone and tell you what to do next.

Will I always be taken to a hospital?

When the ambulance arrives, the paramedics who attend will assess you.

You might be treated on site, or they might decide you need to go to hospital for further treatment.

Arriving at hospital in an ambulance does not mean you will be treated more quickly.

What to expect when I am being transported in an ambulance?

Ambulances have equipment for a variety of medical emergencies. This includes equipment to stabilise someone and get them to hospital safely.

All ambulances have equipment to allow communication with the ambulance base and local hospital.

Who works in an ambulance?

Paramedics give emergency health care. They are sometimes called first responders.

Qualified paramedics are registered with the Paramedicine Board of Australia. You can check their registration at the Australian Health Practitioners Regulation Authority (AHPRA) website.

What is the cost of an ambulance?

Medicare does not cover the cost of ambulance services. The cost for an ambulance varies between each state and territory.

To find out more about the fees in your state, visit:

- Australia Capital Territory
- New South Wales
- Northern Territory
- Queensland
- South Australia
- Tasmania
- Victoria
- Western Australia

You can buy ambulance cover only from most private health insurers. Find out more about ambulance cover.

Are there other medical and non-emergency transport schemes?

If you can't use public or private transport, you may be able to use a non-urgent ambulance. Patient transport services may:

- move you between hospitals
- take you home
- take you to another health service

The availability and costs of patient transport schemes also vary between states.

Read more about travelling to your healthcare appointment.

Resources and Support

Health Translations have information in English and other languages on:

- calling triple zero
- how to get help for a health emergency (Easy Read)
- what happens when an ambulance comes to help you? (Easy Read)

Consider downloading the Emergency+ app. It can use your phone's GPS to find your exact location. So, when you call triple zero (000), you have the information you need.

If you think you have swallowed a poison, call the Poisons Information Centre on 13 11 26.

For non-urgent health problems, you can call the healthdirect helpline on 1800 022 222 (known as NURSE-ON-CALL in Victoria). A registered nurse is available to speak with 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Sources

Find out how we develop and review our content.

Last reviewed: May 2025

Need more information?

These trusted information partners have more on this topic.

General search results | Results for medical professionals

Top results

Ambulance services | NT.GOV.AU

St John Ambulance emergency and non-emergency ambulance services.

Calling an ambulance | Better Health Channel

In a medical emergency, call triple zero (000) for assistance.

Ambulance – when to call one | National Centre for Farmer Health

First aid skills are essential for all farm workers and people living on farms. Knowing what to do in an emergency could save a life, and that life could also be your own.

Queensland Ambulance Service - qld.gov.au

The Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) provides emergency pre-hospital patient care and transport services through a network of 307 ambulance response locations across the state.

Queensland Government

Overview of Health System

An overview of what is covered by private health insurance and what is covered by Medicare for hospital, medical services (general treatment), pharmaceutical benefits and ambulance.

COMMONWEALTH OMBUDSMAN PRIVATE HEALTH INSURANCE

First aid training - qld.gov.au

Information about First aid training courses delivered by Queensland Ambulance Service.

Queensland Government

Ambulance

Depending on which state you live you may need to organise ambulance cover to cover the costs of using an ambulance.

COMMONWEALTH OMBUDSMAN PRIVATE HEALTH INSURANCE

About specialist services | NT.GOV.AU

Specialist services in cities and remote communities, contact information for specialist outreach services.

Hearing services

Hearing services are provided by a range of government and non-government agencies in NSW. This information is provided for consumers to locate NSW Health clinical services they may need.

NT cancer services directory | NT.GOV.AU

Cancer services in the Northern Territory.

Related pages

- Calling triple zero (000)

Search our site for

Paramedics

Symptom Checker

Worried about your health?

Select a symptom, answer some questions, get advice

Start a symptom check

Service Finder

- (•) General practice
- ( ) Pharmacy
- ( ) Hospital
- ( ) Emergency department

Search other services

Enter suburb or postcode

Enter a suburb, town or postcode

[ ] Use current location

Find a service

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healthdirect

We are a government-funded service, providing quality, approved health information and advice



















Healthdirect Australia acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to the Traditional Owners and to Elders both past and present.

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