

Everything EMTs Want You to Know!

Nobody “does disaster” better than an emergency medical technician. The first to arrive at the scene of a crisis, these well-trained pros take charge in a flash. Here’s how to help them work even faster

1 A working cell is optional.

You can contact an emergency operator regardless of whether you’ve paid your cell phone bill. “The FCC requires that all cell phones, even those that have been deactivated, can be used to call 911,” says Don Hunjadi, executive director of the Wisconsin EMS Association. You will, however, need to make sure your phone’s battery is charged, or that you have an adapter cord handy to plug into your car’s cigarette lighter.

2 Your contacts are important.

To ensure that paramedics know exactly whom to call when you’re in trouble, program emergency contact names into your phone with the initials ICE (“in case of emergency”) next to them, suggests Bob Loftus, secretary of the National Association of EMTs, and rank them in order of importance: “1ICE, 2ICE and so on.” Those names will automatically appear at the top of your contact list, making the EMTs’ mission crystal clear.

3 Meds matter.

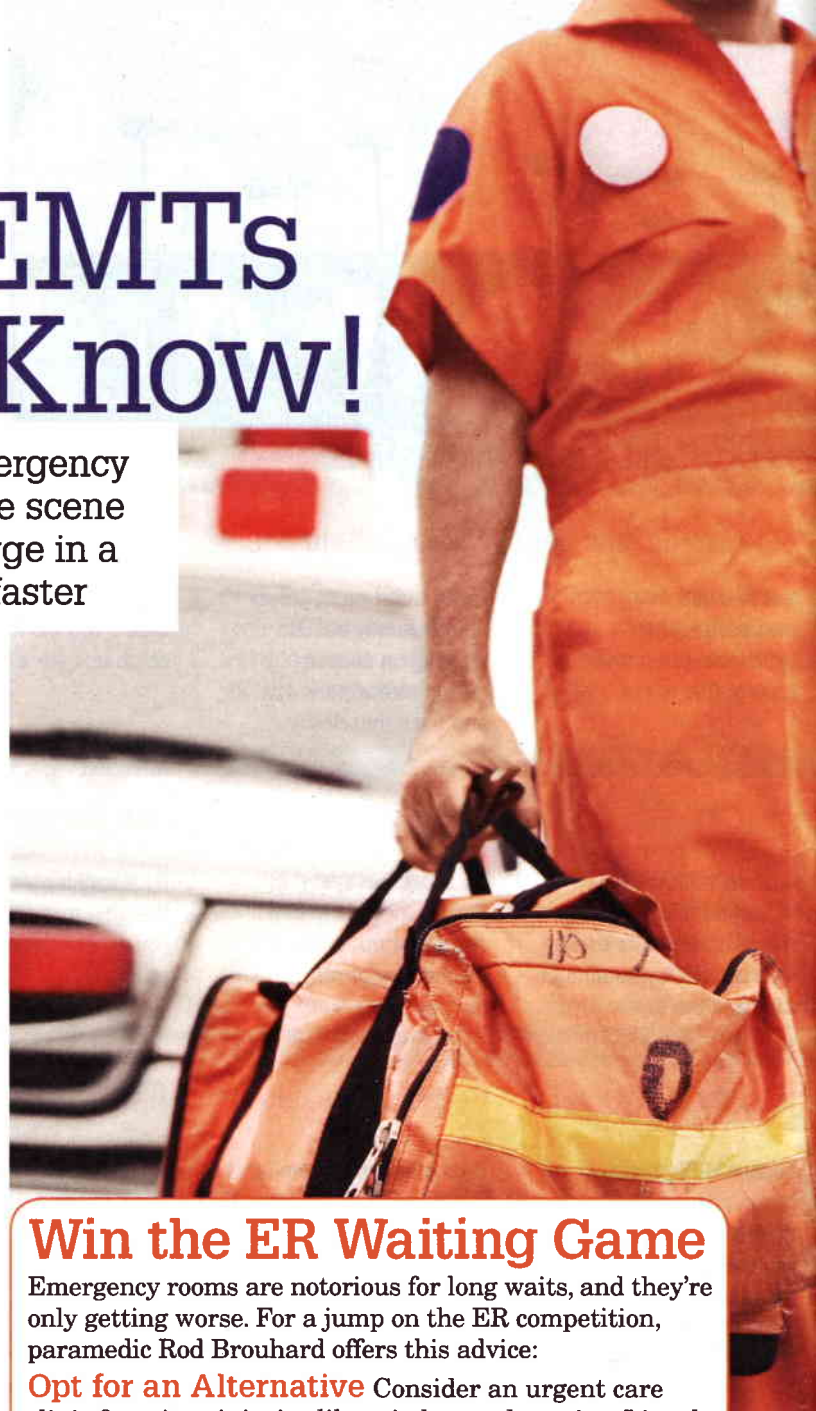
It’s crucial that first responders know what medications you’re taking. “And the middle of an emergency is not the time to rack your brain trying to remember,” says Rod Brouhard, a paramedic in Modesto, Calif. Make a complete list of everything you take, including vitamins and herbal supplements. Note the exact dosages, how many times a day and what time of day you’re dosing yourself — and carry the list with you at all times.

4 Access is key.

When people panic, they sometimes overlook the obvious, which can lead to surprising complications. If you’ve got a nighttime household emergency, remember to flick on a porch light, and have someone stand out front to direct workers inside, Loftus suggests. And if a “tour guide” isn’t on hand, at least remember to unlock the front door!

5 CPR is a mandatory skill!

Although 80 percent of cardiac arrests occur at home, CPR is attempted prior to the EMTs’ arrival in fewer than a third of cases. “CPR is an easy skill to learn,” says Loftus, “and it absolutely saves lives.” To find a course in your area, visit redcross.org.



Win the ER Waiting Game

Emergency rooms are notorious for long waits, and they’re only getting worse. For a jump on the ER competition, paramedic Rod Brouhard offers this advice:

Opt for an Alternative Consider an urgent care clinic for minor injuries like stitches and sprains. Listed in the Yellow Pages, many are open late.

Think Small If you live in a densely populated area, driving a bit farther may ultimately save you time — a hospital in a smaller town may fit you in more quickly.

Speak Up Clearly explain all of your symptoms as soon as you check in — you might at least earn a few pain meds while you wait!

Accidentproof Your Bathroom

More household emergencies take place in bathrooms than anywhere else, says paramedic Rod Brouhard. Because wet floors make for lots of slipping and sliding, be sure you keep a bath mat outside the tub and traction strips on the floor of your shower.