

Healthcare Professionals requesting an ambulance

Preparing for COVID – June 2022



Introduction

Thank you for your support during the Omicron surge earlier this year. As our attention turns to winter demand it is timely to remind you that as a healthcare professional, you should continue to call for an emergency ambulance using **0800 262 665**. For emergencies outside your facility/medical centre it is still appropriate to call 111.

Alongside all of health, St John is continuing to experience significant demand for services as winter illness takes hold. To ensure an appropriate and timely response to patients in primary care, we have once again bolstered capacity on our dedicated healthcare professional phone number.

Your call will be answered by a Paramedic whenever possible. They will work with you to ensure the most appropriate ambulance response, will advise you if there will be significant delays and will offer additional clinical advice if this would be helpful.

Rather than going through a range of questions to determine patient acuity, the Paramedic will simply ask 'is the condition immediately life-threatening'. **Overstating your patient's condition will delay our response to critically ill patients, so it is vital that you answer this question accurately.** Some examples are provided in the attached poster, and we recognise that clinical judgement is needed.

For patients with low acuity problems, the Paramedic may also ask you to consider private transport. If your patient can be safely transported to hospital by private vehicle and is unlikely to need treatment during transport, then we will ask that you consider arranging private transport, whenever this is feasible and safe (for example, arranging a taxi or suggesting transport by family/whānau).

Calling an ambulance

To request an ambulance, healthcare professionals should phone 0800 262 665 (and not 111 unless the emergency is for a patient outside the facility/medical centre).

You will be presented with 3 options:

- **Option 1:** Only use this when the patient has a condition that is **immediately life threatening**, for example cardiac arrest, severe respiratory distress, ST elevation myocardial infarction, severe shock, or acute stroke. This will be prioritised, and an ambulance will respond urgently.
- **Option 2:** Use this option for all other patients requiring transport to hospital but where the condition is not immediately life-threatening, for example chest pain without evidence of ST elevation myocardial infarction, systemic infection without shock, limb injuries including fractured neck of femur and shortness of breath without severe hypoxia.
- **Option 3:** this is for scheduled transfers only (such as inter-hospital transfers) and generally not for use for patients in primary care.

For more information

Attached is a one-page document entitled Requesting an ambulance that describes typical priorities of ambulance response to different clinical conditions. Please share this with your staff and display it in an appropriate area, noting that it is not intended for public view.

If you have any questions or suggestions, please send them to St John Clinical Director Dr Tony Smith at clinical.excellence@stjohn.org.nz