

Tuscaloosa Pediatrics Telephone Policy

Emergency Calls (Day or Night):

Call 911 for any life threatening emergency in which your child may require resuscitation (seizure, not breathing, severe choking spell, unconscious, etc.)

Call our office for minor emergencies (accidents, allergic reactions, etc.) When you call, always state clearly "This is an emergency." Do not let the answering service or office staff put you on hold.

For accidental ingestions, call the poison control center at 1-800-222-1222.

Calls about sick children during office hours:

We see sick children by appointment Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. and from 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

We also offer walk-in hours Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. Our walk-in clinic is for acute illness only (ear infections, fever, vomiting, etc.). We do not see chronic illnesses or routine rechecks during this time since your child will be seeing the "walk-in doctor" who will vary from day to day. Children with chronic illnesses are best served by seeing their regular doctor at a scheduled sick visit appointment.

If your child is sick but you are uncertain if he needs to be seen by the doctor, call and press the prompt to speak with one of our telephone nurses. They are specially trained to make decisions about which patients need to be seen by the doctor and how to provide home care for children who don't need to be seen urgently.

If the office staff is busy, please leave a message and they will return your call. If your call is not returned within 60 minutes then please call again. If your call is more urgent, then please stay on hold until you are assisted. Keep in mind that Monday mornings and the winter months are our busiest times.

We keep appointments open during the later hours of the afternoon for children who become ill later in the day and need to be seen at that time. Therefore, we appreciate your cooperation in taking earlier in the day appointment times when you call in the morning.

Well Child Appointments and Questions:

We are happy to provide you with information regarding parenting issues but we recommend first checking our website www.tuscaloosapeds.com as there are links to information sites that may answer your questions. Please call about behavioral questions or other well child issues during regular office hours. We suggest in the late morning or early to mid-afternoon when the phones may be less busy. These calls will have less priority to be returned, especially in the busy winter months. If you leave a message, our goal would be to return your call within a 24 hour period. It may also depend on whether your child's regular doctor is in the office that day as these questions are generally best answered by the child's regular pediatrician.

You can request a Well Child checkup or ADHD recheck through our website, www.tuscaloosapeds.com or you can call for an appointment. Please try to call during the late morning or mid-afternoon hours to schedule these appointments as the phones will be less busy. When you are making an appointment, please let our office staff know of any significant medical problems your child is having that will need to be addressed at their checkup so they can schedule adequate time for the visit.

During the winter months, we sometimes limit our checkups to children under 2 years of age due to the large volume of sick patients during this time.

Prescription refills:

We phone in prescription refills to pharmacies only during office hours because we need to have your child's chart available to check on dosages and disease status. Plan ahead so you don't run out of important medicines.

Always have the name and phone number of your pharmacy available when you call the office.

You can also request a non urgent refill online through our website www.tuscaloosapeds.com. These take up to 3 days to process so please do not request any medications you are nearly out of in this way.

Every effort is made to have a refill request called in the same day but it may take up to 3 business days. Prescription refills require a physician authorization so it may be after 5 p.m. before the doctor has a chance to look at your request or your doctor may be out of the office that day. Please check with your pharmacy to make sure the prescription is ready.

After Hours Calls:

After office hours, please call only for emergencies or urgent problems that cannot wait until the next office day (fever in an infant, recurrent vomiting, labored breathing/wheezing, severe abdominal pain, severe headache, unusual rashes, injuries, etc.) Please wait until regular office hours to call about problems like constipation, sore throat, cold symptoms, cough, earaches, etc.

At 4:00 p.m. each day our phones are transferred to our answering service who will then forward your call to a triage nurse based out of Children's Hospital. The nurse at Children's will return calls based on the urgency of the situation. There is always a physician on call as well for the nurse to contact if she is unable to handle the situation.

After hours calls to the nurse will be charged a \$10.00 fee.

Although the goal is to return your call in 1 hour or less, during the busy winter months it may be longer. If your child is having significant problems like labored breathing or a traumatic accident, we recommend you take them directly to the Emergency Room at DCH Regional Medical Center in Tuscaloosa.

Saturday Office Hours:

We do not have regularly scheduled office hours on Saturday. However, if your child needs to be seen for an acute illness there is usually a physician from our office or another local pediatrician in our call group that will be available to see your child. The physician location and office hours change from week to week so please call our office number 205-333-8222 and you will be directed to the appropriate clinic. There is no walk-in clinic on Saturdays.

Please have the following information available when you call (except in Emergencies):

- your child's main symptoms
- any chronic health problems your child has
- your child's temperature if he is sick
- your child's approximate weight
- names and dosages of your child's medications
- your pharmacy's name and phone number
- a list of your questions
- a pen and paper ready to take down instructions
- have your child nearby in case you need to check something or ask them something about their condition