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Emergency Care in Germany — Notaufnahme, Emergency Services and ER

A guide to Germany's emergency system: when to call 112 or 116 117, what to expect at Notaufnahme (ER), waiting times by triage color, and costs with insurance.

Deutsche Begriffe: Notaufnahme | Notarzt | Rettungsdienst | 112 | 116117

Notaufnahme — Emergency Cases

Which number to call?

Number	When
112	Life-threatening emergency, accident, fire
116 117	Urgent but not life-threatening (evening/weekend)

112 — Emergency Call (Ambulance Service)

Call when:

- Loss of consciousness
- Severe chest pain
- Difficulty breathing
- Serious accident
- Suspected stroke/heart attack
- Severe bleeding

What to say:

• Where? (address)

• What happened?

• How many people?

• What injuries?

• Wait for questions!

116 117 — Ärztlicher Bereitschaftsdienst (On-Call Doctor Service)

Call when:

• You need a doctor in the evening/weekend

• It's urgent but not life-threatening

• E.g., high fever, severe pain, infection

They will:

• Provide phone advice

• Direct you to an on-call clinic (Bereitschaftspraxis)

• Send a doctor to your home (Hausbesuch)

Notaufnahme (Emergency Room)

Go yourself when:

• Fractures, dislocations

• Deep wounds

• Severe abdominal pain

• High fever in children

DON'T go to ER when:

• Cold

• Headache

• Problems that can wait until morning

How much does it cost?

With insurance (GKV):

• Emergency 112: **€0**

• ER: **€0**

• Ambulance transport: **€10** (max 28 days/year)

How long do you wait at the ER?

Triage system — most critical patients first.

Color	Waiting time
Red	Immediate
Orange	Up to 10 min
Yellow	Up to 30 min
Green	Up to 90 min
Blue	Up to 120 min

Minor injury = you might wait for hours!

Emergency Vocabulary:

German	English
Ich brauche Hilfe	I need help
Ich habe Schmerzen	I have pain
Ich kann nicht atmen	I cannot breathe
Unfall	Accident
Blut	Blood
Krankenwagen	Ambulance