

ARE YOU READY?



Get Ready

AN INITIATIVE OF THE
AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

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Emergency preparedness for pregnant women and families with infants

Disasters can be stressful, especially if you are pregnant or caring for an infant. Making plans ahead of time and knowing what to do when a disaster occurs can help keep you safe during an emergency.

Get ready before a disaster

- Learn about safety and evacuation procedures for your child's school or day care.
- Take emergency training on first aid or CPR. Check with your local American Red Cross chapter for training classes.
- Identify a meet-up spot for family members in case you are separated and cannot reach home.
- If you are pregnant, know the location of other places to have your baby in case you cannot get to the hospital or birthing center of your choice. If you are close to your due date, talk to your health care provider about what to do in case of an emergency.
- Make sure you know how to shut off gas, water and electric supplies. Keep a fire extinguisher in your home. Familiarize yourself with community shelters and evacuation plans and make sure that your car is full of gas in case you need to leave.



Photo courtesy FEMA

Plan your emergency supplies

Put together an emergency kit for your family, including supplies such as flashlights, batteries, a first-aid kit, food and water.



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If you are pregnant, your kit should also have:

- nutritious foods, such as protein bars, nuts, dried fruit and granola
- maternity and baby clothes
- prenatal vitamins and other medications
- extra bottled water
- emergency birth supplies, such as clean towels, sharp scissors, infant bulb syringe, medical gloves, two white shoelaces, sheets and sanitary pads
- two blankets
- closed-toe shoes

If you have an infant, your kit should also have:

- a thermometer
- copies of vaccination records
- antibacterial wipes and hand sanitizer
- dish soap
- a portable crib
- baby food in pouches or jars and disposable feeding spoons
- two baby blankets
- extra baby clothes and shoes for older infant
- baby sling or carrier
- diapers, wipes and diaper rash cream
- medications and infant pain reliever, such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen
- small disposable cups
- ready-to-feed formula in single serving cans or bottles*

*For use if medically necessary

During and after a disaster

If you evacuate, remember to take your emergency kit with all your medicines, medical documents and emergency supplies for your family. Upon arrival at a shelter, make sure officials know that you are pregnant or have an infant with you. Strollers may not be of use when there is debris on the ground, so a baby carrier or sling is essential for getting around.

Breastfeeding is the best food for your baby. Breast milk is naturally clean, helps protect your infant from illnesses and can provide comfort to both you and your baby. If you are a mom who relies on pumped milk, make sure you know how to express your milk by hand and how to feed your baby with a cup. Breast pumps cannot be cleaned without clean water and milk cannot be stored without refrigeration.



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Breastfeeding mothers can continue to make milk during stressful events such as disasters. It is important that nursing mothers get extra food and fluids, but even moms who have gone without food can breastfeed. Keeping your baby warm and close will provide extra protection for your baby.

If it is medically necessary to feed your baby infant formula during a disaster, ready-to-feed formula is recommended. Clean water may not be available for mixing with powdered formula or for cleaning bottles and nipples. Feeding your baby with a small disposable cup is preferable. Even tiny babies can use a cup. Unused formula cannot be refrigerated during a power outage, so small containers of formula work best.

Being pregnant during and after a disaster can be a stressful time and hard on your body. Rest as much as you can, drink plenty of clean water and eat several times during the day. It is important to go for your regular prenatal care visits as soon as you are out of immediate danger. If you cannot reach your regular health care provider, ask at the emergency shelter or local hospital where you can go to receive care.

Many new mothers have “the blues” after the birth of their baby. You may feel irritable, cry easily or feel sad. But if these feelings last longer than the first 10 days after birth, they may be a sign of postpartum depression. If you think you may have postpartum depression, call a health professional. This is a serious illness. Do not be afraid to ask for help or discuss your feelings. If you ever feel like harming yourself or your baby, talk to a health care provider right away.

Dealing with a disaster can be a stressful time for a family, especially if you have been evacuated from your home. If you are concerned about your relationship or your safety, call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233.

Know the signs of preterm labor

Preterm labor – which is labor that begins before 37 weeks of pregnancy – may occur in some pregnant women after a disaster. If you have any signs of preterm labor, call your health care provider, go to the hospital or tell the person in charge of the emergency shelter right away:

- contractions that make your belly tighten up like a fist every 10 minutes or more often
- low, dull backache
- change in the color of your vaginal discharge, or bleeding from your vagina
- cramps that feel like your period
- the feeling that your baby is pushing down, called pelvic pressure
- belly cramps with or without diarrhea



For more information on healthy pregnancies and babies, visit marchofdimes.org