

ARE YOU READY?



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Ready**

AN INITIATIVE OF THE
AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

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Hurricane preparedness for pregnant women and families with infants

Unlike some disasters, hurricanes usually come with warnings, giving pregnant women and families with infants time to prepare. Being prepared before a hurricane strikes can help you and your family stay safe.

Before a hurricane

Create a family communication plan so everyone knows what needs to be done before and during a hurricane or in an evacuation. Review and practice the plan with all family members. Learn about safety and evacuation procedures for your child's school or day care.

If you need to evacuate, know where the nearest shelter is and how to get there safely. If there is a storm forecasted, make sure your cars are filled with gas.

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.



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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 hurricane

While the decision to leave your home can be hard, do not ignore evacuation orders. If evacuated, upon arrival at the shelter, make sure that officials know that you are pregnant or have an infant with you. No matter where you are, it is important to continue your prenatal care.

If evacuation orders are not given and you remain at home, stay inside until officials say it is safe to leave. If your home is too damaged to stay in after a hurricane, you may need to go to a shelter or to stay with friends or family, so decide beforehand where you can go.

If you are pregnant, take care not to get dehydrated or overtired during clean-up after a hurricane. Drink plenty of clean water, take cool showers and stay in an air-conditioned area if possible. Do not try to lift large or heavy objects. If you are worried about yourself or your baby, contact your health care provider immediately. Wash your hands well after coming into contact with floodwaters, as they may be polluted.

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. 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 hurricane 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.



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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
- change in the color of your vaginal discharge, or bleeding from your vagina
- the feeling that your baby is pushing down, called pelvic pressure
- low, dull backache
- cramps that feel like your period
- belly cramps with or without diarrhea



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