

ARE YOU READY?



Get Ready

AN INITIATIVE OF THE
AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

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Tornado preparedness for pregnant women and families with infants



Tornadoes can strike with little or no warning. They can be stressful for pregnant women and those caring for infants. Preparing ahead of time for a tornado can help keep you and your loved ones safe.

Before a tornado

- Learn about your community's tornado warning system. If you have children, find out about their day care or school tornado plan.
- Choose a room where your family and pets can stay safe during a tornado. The ideal room is in a basement or underground shelter. If those are not available, choose a room in the middle of your home with no windows. Create and practice a household tornado drill so that everyone knows where to go and what to do.
- During storms, use a battery-operated radio to listen to weather updates and instructions from local officials.
- Be aware of tornado warning signs:
 - dark, greenish skies
 - a large, dark, low-lying cloud
 - a loud roar
 - large hail
 - a visible, rotating funnel

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 tornado

If you are inside when a tornado occurs, go as quickly as possible to the shelter area, making sure to stay away from windows. If you are away from home, such as at work, let officials know that you are pregnant or have an infant with you.



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Once the tornado has passed, there will be a period of cleanup. During this time, watch out for broken debris, fallen electrical wires and damaged gas lines. Make sure to wash or sanitize your hands as often as possible. Check yourself and your children for any injuries. If you are worried about your or your baby's health, contact your health care provider or emergency shelter staff immediately.

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 tornado 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.

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