

ARE YOU READY?



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Ready**

AN INITIATIVE OF THE
AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

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Earthquake preparedness for pregnant women and families with infants

Earthquakes can happen almost anywhere and without warning. Preparing for an earthquake and knowing what to do if one happens is important, especially if you are pregnant or are caring for an infant.

Before an earthquake

- Identify a meet-up spot for family members in case you are separated and cannot get home after an earthquake.
- 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.
- 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.
- Secure large appliances and heavy pieces of furniture to the wall.

Gather 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
- prenatal medical records
- maternity and baby clothes
- prenatal vitamins and other medications
- extra bottled water
- emergency birth supplies, such as clean towels, sharp scissors, infant bulb syringe, sterile 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 to last seven days, and feeding spoons
- bottles
- two baby blankets
- extra baby clothes and shoes for older infant
- ready-to-feed formula that does not need water, to last seven days
- baby sling or carrier
- diapers, wipes and diaper rash cream to last seven days
- medications and infant liquid pain reliever, such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen

During and after an earthquake

When an earthquake happens, the U.S. Geological Survey says it is best to duck, cover and hold on. When an earthquake starts, find a sturdy piece of furniture, such as a strong table or desk, crawl underneath it and hold on to its legs until the shaking stops. Hold your children close to you. If you are outside, move to a clear area away from trees, signs, buildings, electrical wires and poles. Once in the open, stay there until the shaking stops.

Aftershocks are common after an earthquake. React to aftershocks the same way you would react to an earthquake: Duck, cover and hold on. If you evacuate, remember to take your emergency kit with all your medicines, medical documents and emergency supplies for your family. When you get to a shelter, make sure officials there know that you are pregnant or have an infant with you.

If you have an infant, breastfeeding is the best food for your baby after an earthquake. It is naturally clean, helps protect your infant from illnesses and can provide comfort to both you and your baby. Continuing to breastfeed after an earthquake will help keep up your milk supply.

If you are feeding your baby infant formula, ready-to-feed formula is recommended because no water is needed to prepare it. If it is not possible to use ready-to-feed formula, use bottled water to prepare the powdered or concentrated formula after an earthquake, as water supplies may be contaminated. If bottled water is unavailable, use boiled water. When preparing formula with boiled water, let the formula cool before giving it to your baby. Always clean all bottles and nipples before each use. Wash or sanitize your hands before preparing formula. If you are breastfeeding, you should think about getting some ready-to-feed formula in case the emergency affects your milk supply or makes it so you cannot breastfeed.

Being pregnant during and after an earthquake 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.



Photo by Richard Walker, courtesy Flickr Creative Commons

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