

ARE YOU READY?



Preparing for emergencies: Tips for pregnant women and new moms

There are a number of special precautions that soon-to-be mothers and new moms should take to keep themselves and their loved ones safe from harm. And planning for a disaster is no different.

Special care

Pregnant women and infants will have special needs in a disaster. Planning ahead is critical to staying safe and healthy as well as lessening the emotional stress of an emergency.

First, take some basic emergency preparedness steps. Learn about the kinds of disasters that can happen where you live, your community's emergency warning systems, evacuation routes and shelters.

It's also important to remember that during a disaster like a hurricane or tornado, you may not be able to make it to a hospital or even call for help. If you're pregnant, talk to your health care provider about the signs of preterm labor and how to prepare for an emergency birth.

There are often classes you can take to help you prepare for such a situation. If you're a new mom, consider taking a first aid class where you can learn the proper way to give CPR to newborns and toddlers.

When putting together your household emergency stockpile kit, make sure to include items related to pregnancy and newborn care in addition to basic emergency supplies such as a flashlight, battery-operated radio, first aid kit, extra batteries, clean water and nonperishable foods as well as important medications and documents.

If you're pregnant, it's a good idea to include copies of your prenatal medical records, prenatal medications, extra maternity clothes and plenty of hand sanitizer in your emergency kit, as pregnant women are more vulnerable to infections and toxins. Supplies needed for an emergency birth include clean towels and scissors, sterile gloves, sheets and sanitary pads.

If you're caring for an infant, be sure to include extra baby food, diapers and wipes, copies of medical and immunization records, hand sanitizer and a hands-free way to transport your baby, such as a sling, in case of evacuation.



Photo courtesy iStockphoto—Mark Bowden

Make a plan

When creating an emergency plan, make sure all household members are involved and know what to do. Designate an emergency contact person as well as an emergency meeting place in case a disaster happens when you and your loved ones are separated. Keep your plan in a place where other adult caregivers, such as grandparents or babysitters, can easily find it.

In case emergency officials instruct you to evacuate, you should have your emergency supplies ready and easily packaged to take with you. If you go to a shelter, immediately let officials know that you are pregnant and continue your regular prenatal care. Also, let shelter officials know if you are caring for an infant with special medical needs.



Photo courtesy iStockphoto—Aldo Murillo

Breast is still best



Photo courtesy iStockphoto—Benjamin Howell

Studies show that breastfeeding is one of the best ways to keep your baby healthy now and far into the future. And in an emergency, breastfeeding can be even more important and can even save lives.

Breastfeeding can protect infants from contaminated water supplies as well as respiratory illnesses and diarrhea. These illnesses can become serious in the wake of a disaster, especially if you have limited access to health care services. Continuing to breastfeed in an emergency will help you keep your milk supply up and can be a calming effect for both mom and baby. (But if you are not breastfeeding, don't forget to pack formula in your emergency supplies.)



800 I Street, NW · Washington, DC · 20001-3710
202-777-APHA · www.aphagetready.org · getready@apha.org



ARE YOU READY?



Get Ready

AN INITIATIVE OF THE
AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

march  of dimes®

Creating a disaster kit for pregnant women and families with infants

Parents, caretakers and pregnant women should take extra steps to keep themselves and their families safe during disasters. No matter the type of emergency, it is important to be prepared by creating a disaster kit.

Plan your emergency supplies

All families should have at least a three-day supply of food and water stored in their homes, with at least one gallon of water per person per day. If you have the space, experts recommend a week's supply of food and water. Choose foods that do not require refrigeration and are not high in salt. Your stockpile also should contain flashlights, a manual can opener, a radio, batteries and copies of important documents. Depending on your family's needs, you also may need items such as medical supplies, pet food or contact lens solution.

If it is too expensive for you to buy everything for your stockpile at once, pick up one or two items every time you go to the grocery store. Stock up on canned vegetables, diapers or baby food when there is a sale. Bulk "club" stores also can help you save money on your supplies, especially if you split a case with a friend, co-worker or neighbor, who can serve as your "preparedness buddy."

Once you have assembled your stockpile, put it where you will not be tempted to "borrow" from it the next time you run out of wipes or need diapers. Remember: Your stockpile is for emergencies!

Special supplies for your disaster preparedness kit

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



Photo courtesy iStockphoto

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

Infant care and feeding during disasters



Photo courtesy iStockphoto

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.

Storing your emergency supplies

- It is best to keep all your supplies together in case you have to evacuate quickly, such as during a hurricane.
- Store your stockpile somewhere that is easy to access during an emergency. A cool, dark place is ideal. Be sure not to store your food close to any solvents or cleaners that can leak or transfer fumes, or in an area of the house that is at risk for flooding.
- Keep your supplies together in a box or plastic bin that can be kept tightly closed to protect contents from humidity or pests.
- In a pinch, a laundry basket can make an easy storage container.
- Check your supplies regularly to make sure that nothing has leaked or is expired. A good tip is to use the twice-a-year clock change as a reminder to update your emergency stockpile.



Photo courtesy iStockphoto



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