

Emergency Preparedness and Response for Pregnant Women, Infants, and Children



SCAN FOR MORE

If you are pregnant, just had a baby, and/or are breastfeeding, you and your baby have unique needs during infectious disease outbreaks, natural disasters such as floods, fires, and storms or other public health emergencies. Planning for how to maintain and protect your health in a public health emergency is a key aspect of preparedness.

You may face challenges during and after public health emergencies, including health risks, difficulties getting the help you need, and unplanned complications:

- Closed or damaged hospitals, providers offices, and birthing centers
- Difficulty accessing essential medications, supplements, birth control, mental health services, or breastfeeding support, and managing existing health issues
- Difficulty contacting your provider or a provider that could resume your care
- Unplanned births at home, outside of hospitals or birthing centers
- Premature births, low birth weight, and risks of losing the baby
- Pregnancy-related health problems and complications after birth
- Exposures to infectious diseases (such as COVID-19, Influenza [flu], norovirus, or hepatitis A)
- Exposures to environmental hazards (such as extreme heat, smoke, water contamination, chemicals, or mold)
- Potential threats from violence that may follow disasters
- Disrupted access to safe water, nutritious foods, food assistance programs, support systems and transportation

You may worry about caring for your children (including infants) due to:

- Concerns about contaminants in breastmilk due to mothers' exposure to chemicals in flood water or contamination of water supplies and food sources
- Lack of safe water for formula feeding, maintaining mothers' hydration for breast milk supply, and cleaning of infant feeding supplies
- Lack of electricity causing difficulty refrigerating milk and food and use of electric breast pumps
- Exposures to infectious diseases and environmental contaminants
- Keeping your children warm or cool
- Loss, damage, shortage or safety concerns of essential childcare supplies including safe water, nutritious food, diapers, and formula
- Unsafe shelter conditions including sleeping environment
- Interrupted access to childcare, education, social interactions, healthcare, medications, and medical supplies



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Ways to Prepare for an Emergency: Plan Ahead

- If you are pregnant, talk to your healthcare provider to help you make a plan for where you will get prenatal care or deliver your baby if you are unable to deliver your baby as planned.
- **Learn how to recognize urgent signs and symptoms** during pregnancy and in the year after delivery. Talk with your healthcare provider about steps to take in case of an emergency and what to do if you experience any important warning signs and symptoms that something is wrong with your health and needs immediate attention.
- **Stay informed** by learning how to receive community emergency alerts, such as texts, to ensure you receive timely information when emergencies happen.
- **Know where to shelter** or learn where to shelter now in case you need to leave your home. Search for open shelters near you by **texting SHELTER and your ZIP code to 43362. Example: Shelter 01234.**
- **Create a family emergency plan** for how you and your family will contact one another and what steps you will take in different types of emergency situations.
- **Understand the emergency plan for your child's school and childcare facility.**
- Prioritize emotional health and stress management, as well as physical health. Engage in physical activity, rest, stay hydrated, and seek help if feeling overwhelmed or stressed.
National Maternal Mental Health Hotline: 1-833-TLC-MAMA.





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Building an Emergency Preparedness Kit

An individual emergency kit is essential for preparedness. Tailor it to your daily needs by including items you use every day or week. Keep it updated, complete, and accessible, checking for expiration dates and functionality every six months.



-  Face mask (to help filter dirty air)
-  Extra batteries, portable charger, cell phone with chargers
-  Bug spray and sunscreen
-  Soap, paper towels, hand sanitizer, wipes to clean surfaces and kill germs
-  Medications (at least 2 week's supply of all prescription medications, list of medications and strength/dosing details, and a cooler for refrigerated medications), medical items, prescription eyewear
-  Battery-powered or hand crank radio
-  Matches in a waterproof container or re-sealable plastic bag, small camp stove to boil water to disinfect and make safer to use
-  Supplies for your pet for several days
-  Emergency cash, change, traveler's checks
-  Extra set of car and house keys
-  First aid kit
-  Flashlight
-  Water (at least one gallon per person per day for several days, for drinking, cooking, cleaning, and other uses). Consider storing more water than this if you are pregnant or lactating
-  Sturdy shoes for each person in the house
-  Sleeping bag or warm blanket for everyone in your family
-  Local maps and/or download local maps on your cell phone (if you need to evacuate and have no power or access to internet)
-  Zip ties, toilet paper, moist towelettes, and garbage bags (for keeping yourself/things clean)
-  Food (at least a several-day supply of long-lasting food such as dried fruit, granola, protein or fruit bars, canned food, manual can opener)
-  Items for cooking and eating (such as paper plates, disposable cups)
-  Scissors, plastic sheeting, and duct tape (to shelter in place)
-  Whistle (to signal for help)
-  List of medical, pharmacy, mental health, family and emergency contact names and phone numbers, personal identification, copies of important documents in waterproof and/or fireproof, portable container
-  Wrench or pliers (to turn off utilities like gas or water)
-  Change of clothes appropriate for the weather in the area

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Building an Emergency Preparedness Kit

Add the following items to your individual emergency kit based on your family dynamic:

If pregnant add...

- Nutritious snacks such as protein bars, dried fruit and granola
- Maternity clothes
- Baby clothes
- Prenatal vitamins and other medications
- Extra water (e.g., bottled, box, canned)
- Emergency birth supplies (e.g., clean towels, clean sharp scissors, nasal suction bulb, medical gloves, two clean white shoelaces (for tying umbilical cord), clean sheets, sanitary pads, soap/alcohol/sanitizer, garbage bags)*
- Emergency blankets
- Feminine hygiene products (e.g., sanitary napkins, incontinence pads)
- Plan you made with your health care provider for where you will get prenatal care or deliver your baby if your provider's office or hospital is closed.
- Personal identification and current family identification photos (including a photo of all members of the family together). This can also be shared with your out-of-area contact(s). Photos can help with family reunification should family members become separated.

For an infant (0-12 months), add...

- Copy of vaccination records
- Medications (e.g., infant pain reliever)
- Thermometer
- Antibacterial wipes/sanitizer
- Portable crib
- Baby blankets
- Extra baby clothes
- Diapers, wipes, and diaper rash cream
- Bottles/nipples and powdered or ready-to-feed formula (just in case breast milk supply is impacted), breast milk (small cooler for breast milk), and/or infant food
- Battery operated or manual breast pump
- Cleaning basin, brush, and dish soap
- Electrolytes
- Disposable nursing pads
- Baby carrier
- Teething rings, pacifiers
- Disposable feeding items (e.g., bibs, burp clothes, spoons, plates, and cups)

For a young child (1-5 years), add...

- Nutritious snacks
- Age-appropriate water bottle
- Transportable activities (e.g., colored pencils, coloring book, crafts)
- Extra clothes and shoes
- Play yard or playpen
- Potty training supplies (e.g., pull-ups)
- Disposable feeding items (e.g., spoons, plates, and cups)
- Simple ID tags: create a durable emergency contact/ID tag that can be attached to your child's clothing or backpack.
- Wearable identification: consider using a wristband or bracelet with your child's name and your contact information.
- Help older children memorize important names and phone numbers (parents, other trusted adult).

*Consult with your health care provider to determine the appropriate emergency birth supplies to pack, as well as guidance on their usage.

Graphic adapted from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). (2021). HHS Maternal-Child Health Emergency Planning Toolkit. Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response (ASPR).

