

Staying Healthy at a Disaster Shelter

Staying in a shelter can be hard, especially with a lot of people in a small space. It's important to take care of yourself and your family. Here are some tips to help you stay healthy.

Protect your health and avoid germs.

- Stay clean. Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and clean water are not available.
- Don't share food, drinks, bedding, or personal items, if possible.
- Clean surfaces in your space using disinfectant wipes, if available.
- Stay hydrated and eat food from safe sources to stay healthy. Only drink water provided by the shelter or marked safe to drink.
- Wear a well-fitting mask for extra protection.
- Let shelter staff know if you're feeling sick or have been around someone who is sick.



Take care of your mental health.

- It's okay to feel stressed, sad, or overwhelmed. Talk with people like family, friends, shelter staff, or other shelter residents about how you're feeling.
- Do gentle exercises, like walking or stretching, to help relax and feel better.
- Ask for help when needed. Small steps to care for yourself make a big difference.



Good air flow can help keep you from getting sick. Ask shelter staff to keep portable air cleaners on (if available) and open windows if it's safe.

Manage medical conditions and medication.

- Share emergency contact information with shelter staff and with people you trust.
- Tell shelter staff if you're pregnant or have health issues (like diabetes, allergies, asthma, or others) so they can help with any personal needs, including medical equipment.
- Tell someone you trust or shelter staff what medications you take so they can help in an emergency. If you don't have your medications with you, they might be able to help you get the medicines you need.



For more support, call or text SAMHSA's Disaster Distress Hotline: 1-800-985-5990.

Help children cope and stay safe in a shelter.

- Keep a close eye on your children.
- Stay calm and reassure them. Let them talk about their feelings.
- Talk to them about what is happening. Explain things in a way children can understand.
- Give them activities to stay busy, like games or coloring books.



Keep babies safe. Follow shelter guidance for diapering and safely cleaning bottles.



By following these tips, you can improve your mental and physical health while staying in a shelter. Taking care of yourself will help you handle the challenges of living in a shelter and better cope with the emergency in your community.



For more information, visit [cdc.gov/hurricanes](https://www.cdc.gov/hurricanes).