



Pregnancy and Planning for Disasters

Everyone needs to be ready for emergencies like hurricanes, floods and winter storms. But, pregnant women are at higher risk during these events. There are steps that pregnant women and their families can take to stay safe during disasters.

What do pregnant women need to add to their emergency kits?

Emergency kits are important for everyone, but pregnant women need to include a few more items such as:

- **Prenatal vitamins and medicines:** keep a one-week supply in your kit
- **Medical and insurance information:** During a disaster, you may still need medical care. Ask for a copy of your medical records because your usual healthcare provider may be unable to see you. Copy your insurance information too. Write down important medical and emergency contact information and keep it and the copies in a sealed plastic bag.
- **Maternity and newborn supplies:** Shelters may not have maternity clothes, nursing pads, or clothing for newborns. Add these and other supplies you may need to your kit.



To learn more about emergency kits, visit <http://www.ready.gov/america/getakit/>

How can I get ready for a disaster?

- **Talk to your health care provider about:**
 - What to do in any emergency
 - Where you will get prenatal care in a disaster
 - Where you will deliver your baby if your hospital is closed
- **Have a support system:** Getting ready for and recovering from a disaster can be stressful. Ask family and friends for support now. It is important for pregnant women to find healthy ways to reduce the stress they feel. Knowing that you are not alone and sharing your feelings can help you if you are stressed or sad during a disaster.
- **Learn about breastfeeding:** During many types of emergencies (especially flooding), water and food products such as powdered formula can become unsafe. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends breast milk as the safest food for infants during emergencies. If breastfeeding is not possible, then premixed formula is safest.

Preparing for Emergency Birth

Many childbirth classes cover giving birth during emergencies. Talk about it with your instructor or health care provider.

- Work with your health care provider to learn the signs of early labor or other signs that mean you need medical help
- Take a class on infant and child life support. The American Red Cross and the American Heart Association both offer these.
- Have a kit of emergency birth supplies in your home. Include clean towels, sheets, clean scissors, sterile gloves, sanitary pads, diapers, and instructions for infant-rescue breathing.

What if I need to evacuate?

- Let your health care provider know where you will be staying.
- If you go to a shelter, tell the staff you are pregnant. Let the staff know if you have any special needs or health problems.

What if I go into labor?

Most women who go into labor during a disaster will be able to get to a hospital or birthing center. If you think you are in labor, try to get to a hospital or birth center. Call 911 and ask for help if you are alone or it is unsafe to travel.

What can I do to stay healthy during a disaster?

- Keep getting prenatal care, even if it is not with your usual health care provider.
- Make sure health care providers know about any health problems or special needs that you have. Tell them about any medicines you are taking (over-the-counter and prescription).
- If you have your prenatal vitamins or other medicines with you, keep taking them. If you do not have your vitamins and medicines and you are staying at a shelter, ask staff for help getting them.
- Be careful to avoid infections that may be around you. Washing your hands often and asking others to cover their coughs can help you avoid an infection.
- Try not to walk through or touch floodwater. Wash any part of your body that touches floodwater as soon as you can. Talk to a health care provider if you feel sick after touching floodwater.
- Call your health care provider or 911, or go to the hospital right away if you have any signs of labor.

How can I stay healthy after a disaster?

It is best not to help with disaster cleanup. A damaged home, especially if it was flooded, can have bacteria, mold, and toxins in it that can harm pregnant women. If you are worried about any toxins that you have been exposed to during or after a disaster, the Organization of Teratology Information Specialists (OTIS) website has information for pregnant women. Visit the website at

http://otispregnancy.org/otis_hurricane.asp

Where can I learn more about planning for disasters?

- **CDC's Website:** This site has information on emergency planning if you are pregnant or have young children: <http://www.cdc.gov/Features/Emergencies/Pregnancy-Infants.html>
- **American College of Nurse Midwives:** This webpage on giving birth "in place" has information on giving birth during emergencies: http://www.mymidwife.org/emergency_childbirth.cfm



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