

Emergency Preparedness for Older Adults

Older adults are among the most vulnerable when disaster strikes. That's why it's critical that older people, and those who care for them, prepare for emergencies. If you're an older adult, or care for an older person, follow the steps below to prepare for and respond in an emergency.

STEP 1: CREATE AN EMERGENCY PLAN

HAVE AN EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

- Create a "phone call chain," a plan in which you make an initial call to one person and they in turn call the next person, and so on.
- This will make sure that all relatives and friends know what is happening in the event of an emergency.

KEEP CONTACT INFORMATION COMPLETE AND UP-TO-DATE

- Have the current home, work, and cell phone numbers of people you'll need to contact in an emergency. Make sure those people have your phone number, and the numbers of nearby friends or neighbors.
- Put an extra copy of these numbers in a travel wallet, purse, or suitcase.

DESIGNATE A MEETING PLACE IN CASE YOU HAVE TO EVACUATE YOUR HOME

- Pick two meeting places — one near your home, the other outside the neighborhood — where you can wait and relatives can find you. Make sure everyone has the address and phone number of the meeting location.
- If you are caring for an older adult who lives in a facility, find out where he or she will be taken in case of evacuation.

CONSIDER ORDERING A MEDICAL ID BRACELET

- Consider ordering a medical ID bracelet or pendant for people with chronic health problems. Information on medical conditions, allergies, medications, and emergency contacts can be engraved on the surface.
- For very elderly or disabled adults, put the identification information, list of diagnoses, and medications in a traveler's wallet that can be worn in an emergency.

GET LOCAL EMERGENCY AND EVACUATION INFORMATION IN ADVANCE

- Get a community disaster/emergency plan for your area, if there is one.
- Learn where evacuees might turn for medical care or emergency supplies of medications.
- Obtain a map of evacuation routes and keep it in your car.
- Stay tuned to local radio stations for evacuation instructions.

MAKE TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS IN CASE OF EVACUATION

- Talk to family members (or the directors of the facility where you live) about what you would do in the event of an evacuation.
- Will you be able to drive or will you need someone to pick you up? If so, who, and at what meeting place? Who can provide a back-up ride, and how will that person be contacted?
 - You may also want to ask the director to designate staff who will stay with a very elderly adult during an evacuation.

STEP 2: STOCK AN EMERGENCY MEDICAL KIT

An emergency medical kit should include:

MEDICATIONS

- A 3-6 day supply of your medications along with an up-to-date medication list that includes the names (brand and generic) of any drugs you're taking and the doses.
- An insulated bag big enough to hold a two-week supply of any medications that require refrigeration, such as insulin. Keep ice packs in the freezer for the emergency medical kit.

MEDICAL EQUIPMENT AND NECESSITIES

- Blood sugar monitoring equipment.
- Blood pressure cuff.
- Hearing aids and hearing aid batteries.
- Extra pair of eyeglasses and/or dentures.

WRITTEN INFORMATION ABOUT TREATMENT

- Ask your healthcare provider for copies of your medical records and lists of all active medical problems you have and how they're being treated.
- Extra copies of Medicare, Medicaid, or other medical insurance information.

STEP 3: MAKE A DISASTER SUPPLIES KIT

A disaster supplies kit should include your medical kit equipment and:

WATER

Plan for at least 1 gallon per person per day, and at least a 3-day supply.

FOOD

At least a 3-day supply of canned and dried foods that won't spoil. Juices, soups, and high-protein shakes may be particularly helpful for older adults.

BASIC SUPPLIES

A manual can opener, flashlight, battery powered or hand cranked radio, batteries, waterproof matches, knife, resealable plastic bags, tin foil, disposable cups, plates, utensils, basic cooking utensils, emergency whistle, and cell phone with chargers or solar charger.

MAPS

Local and regional maps in case roads are blocked and you need to take detours.

CHANGE OF CLOTHING & BLANKETS

A complete set of clothing per person: a long sleeved shirt, long pants, shoes, a coat, hat, mittens, and scarf. Also include one blanket per person.

PHONE NUMBERS, CONTACT INFO, AND KEY PAPERS

Numbers and addresses of friends and relatives you might need to contact, your healthcare provider, and any specialists you see. Also include copies of your credit and identification cards.

CASH

It's a good idea to have at least \$50 on hand; if that's not possible, include as much as you can.

FIRST AID KIT AND MANUAL

See the Red Cross's comprehensive list of what to pack in your first aid kit, at www.redcross.org. The Red Cross also sells prepackaged first aid kits.

BASIC HYGIENE PRODUCTS

Soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes, sunscreen, hand sanitizer, toilet paper, baby wipes, and a few trash bags for garbage.