



Helping Children After a Disaster

It's important to remember some children may never show distress, while others may not give evidence of being upset for several weeks or even months after an emergency. Other children may not show a change in behaviors, but may still need your help.

Children may exhibit the following behaviors after a disaster:

- Be upset over the loss of a favorite toy or possession that is important to them.
- Change from being quiet, obedient, and caring to loud, noisy, and aggressive or change from being outgoing to being shy and afraid.
- Develop night-time fears (nightmares, fear of the dark or sleeping alone).
- Be afraid the event will reoccur.
- Become easily upset.
- Lose trust in adults. (After all, their adults were not able to control the disaster.)
- Revert to younger behavior (bed-wetting, thumb-sucking).
- Want to stay close to parents. Refuse to go to school or daycare.
- Feel they caused the disaster because of something they said or did.
- Become afraid of wind, rain, or sudden loud noises.
- Have symptoms of illness, such as headaches, vomiting, or fever.
- Worry about where they and their family will live.

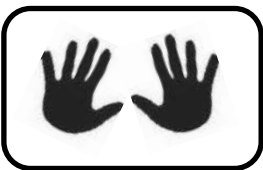
Things parents can do to help their children:

- Talk with children about how they are feeling. Assure them that it's okay to have those feelings.
- Help children learn to use words that express their feelings, such as "happy", "sad", or "angry".
- Children should not be expected to be brave or tough. Tell them it's okay to cry.
- Don't give the children more information than they can handle about the disaster.
- Assure fearful children you will be there to care for them; constantly reassure them.
- Reassure children that the disaster was not their fault.

- Go back to former routines as soon as possible. Maintain a regular schedule for the children.
- Let children have some control, such as choosing clothing and what meal to have for dinner.
- Re-establish contact with extended family members.
- Help your children learn to trust adults again by keeping promises you make.
- Help your children regain faith in the future by making plans.
- Get needed health care as soon as possible.
- Spend extra time with your children at bedtime.
- Make sure children eat healthy meals and get enough rest.
- Allow special privileges for a short period of time, such as leaving the light on when they go to bed.
- Find ways to emphasize to your children that you love them.
- Allow children time to grieve losses.
- Develop positive anniversary activities to commemorate the event. These may bring tears, but they are also a time to celebrate survival and the ability to get back to a normal life.

NOTE:

- Children who experience an initial traumatic event before they are 11 years old are 3 times more likely to develop psychological symptoms than those who experience their first trauma later.
- Children are able to cope better with a traumatic event if parents and other adults support and help them with their experiences.
- Help should start as soon as possible.



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Emergency Management Division
Camp Murray, WA 98430-5122

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253-512-7000; (800) 562-6108



Disaster Tips for People with Special Medical Needs

In a disaster, people with special medical needs have extra concerns. This information will help you and your family think about what extra supplies and equipment each of you may need to be prepared.

Medications:

- Always have an extra supply of all your medications. In some emergencies, such as influenza pandemic, you may need to prepare for a week or more.

Talk to your pharmacist about getting an emergency supply or re-order your prescriptions a few days ahead of time and place the unused medications in your old prescription bottles.

- Store your medications in one location in their original containers.
- Have a list of all your medications: name of medication, doses, frequency, and the name of the prescribing doctor.

Medical supplies:

- Have an extra supply of any medical supplies you use such as bandages, ostomy bags, or syringes.

Electrically powered medical equipment:

- For all medical equipment requiring electrical power - beds, breathing equipment, or infusion pumps - check with your medical supply company and get information regarding a back-up power source such as a battery or generator.

Oxygen and breathing equipment:

- If you use oxygen, have an emergency supply; enough for an extended period of time.
- Oxygen tanks should be securely braced so they do not fall over. Call your medical supply company regarding bracing instructions.
- If you use breathing equipment, have extra tubing, solutions, and medications.



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Intravenous (IV) and feeding tube equipment:

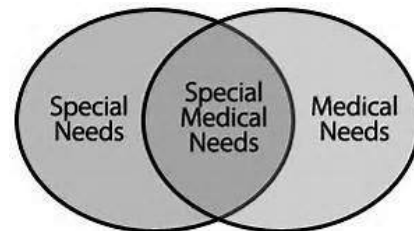
- Know if your infusion pump has battery back-up, and how long it would last in an emergency.
- Ask your home care provider about manual infusion techniques in case of a power outage.
- Have written operating instructions attached to all equipment.

Emergency kit:

- In the event that you have to leave your home, keep a bag packed at all time that contains:
 - A medication list.
 - Medical supplies.
 - Copies of vital medical papers such as insurance cards and power of attorney.

People who can help:

- An important part of being prepared for disaster is planning with family, friends, and neighbors. Know who can walk to your home to assist you if no other means of transportation is available.
- Discuss your disaster plans with your home healthcare provider.
- Ask you local fire department if they keep a list of people with special medical needs; ask to be include if they do maintain a list.
- Keep a phone contact list handy of people who can help.



Special Medical Needs



Disaster Tips for People with Mobility Disabilities

People who have mobility impairments may face unique challenges in an emergency. Make sure you prepare before a disaster strikes, so that you will have the necessary items that you will need during the emergency.

Storage:

- Store emergency supplies in a pack or backpack attached to a walker, wheelchair, or scooter.
- Store needed mobility aids (canes, crutches, walkers, wheelchairs) close to you in a consistent, convenient, and secured location. Keep extra aids in several locations, if possible.

Emergency supply kit:

- Keep a pair of heavy gloves in your supply kit to use while wheeling or making your way over glass or debris.
- If you use motorized wheelchair or scooter, consider having an extra battery available. A car battery can be substituted for a wheelchair battery, but this type of battery will not last as long as a wheelchair's deep-cycle battery. Check with your vendor to see if you will be able to charge batteries by either connecting jumper cables to a vehicle battery or by connecting batteries to a specific type of converter that plugs into your vehicle's cigarette lighter in the event of loss of electricity.
- If your chair does not have puncture-proof tires, keep a patch kit or can of "fix-a-flat" air product to repair a flat tire, or keep an extra supply of inner tubes.
- Store a lightweight manual wheelchair, if available.
- Make sure furniture is secured so that it doesn't block the pathways you normally travel.



- If you spend time above the first floor of a building with an elevator, plan and practice using alternative methods of evacuation. If needed, enlist the help of your personal support network.
- If you cannot use stairs, discuss lifting and carrying techniques that will work for you. There will be times when wheelchair users will have to leave their chairs behind in order to safely evacuate a structure.
- Sometimes transporting someone down stairs is not practical unless there are two or more strong people to control the chair. It is very important to discuss the safest ways to transport you if you need to be carried. Alert helpers to any areas of vulnerability. For example, the traditional "firefighter's carry" may be hazardous to some people with respiratory weakness.



- Be prepared to give helpers brief instructions on the best way to move you.



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Preparedness Tips for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing

People who are deaf or have hearing impairments, may face unique challenges in an emergency. Take a few minutes to assess your needs and start preparing.

Hearing Aids:

- Store hearing aids where you can easily find them after a disaster. For example, you could keep them in a container by your bedside and attach the container to a nightstand or bedpost using a string or Velcro. Missing or damaged hearing aids will be difficult to replace or fix immediately after a major disaster.



Batteries:

- Store extra batteries for hearing aids and implants. If possible, store an extra hearing aid with your emergency supplies.
- Keep your pager, captioned telephone, and other communication equipment charged.
- Maintain batteries and store extras for your TTY and other communications equipment. Check the owner's manual for proper battery maintenance.

Communication:

- Know how to communicate with emergency personnel if there is no interpreter or if you don't have your hearing aids. Store paper and pens for this purpose.
- Consider carrying pre-printed copy of important message with you, such as:
 - I use American Sign Language (ASL) and need an ASL interpreter.
 - I do not speak or read English.
 - If you make announcements, I will need to have them written or signed.
- If possible, get a battery-operated TV that has a decoder chip for access to signed or captioned emergency reports.
- Determine which broadcast systems will provide continuous captioned and/or signed news.

Alarms:

Install smoke alarms that give signals that can be both seen and heard. At least one smoke alarm should be battery operated.

Advocacy issues:

- Recruit interpreters to be Red Cross emergency volunteers.
- Encourage TV stations to broadcast all news and emergency information in open caption format.
- Encourage TV stations to plan to provide interpreters for on-camera duty during emergencies.
- When you travel, be sure hotels have services for the deaf and hard of hearing, including visual alarms. Ask for them when you check in.

I am hard of hearing.

Please face me.

Speak clearly.



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Deaf & Hard of Hearing



Disaster Tips for People with Visual Disabilities

People who have visual disabilities may face unique challenges in an emergency. If you need to wear eyeglasses or contact lenses you are also considered a person with an eyesight disability.

Extra items: *place them where they are easily accessible.*

Glasses:

- If you use glasses, plan to keep extra pairs available.

Contact lenses:

- If you wear contact lenses, plan to keep extra ones with you in case you are unable to return home. Carry an extra lens case and lens solution, if necessary.

Canes:

- If you use a cane, keep extras in strategic, consistent, and secure locations at work, home, school and volunteer sites to help you maneuver around obstacles and hazards.
- Keep a spare cane in your emergency kit.

Alternative mobility cues:

- If you have some vision, place security lights in each room to light paths of travel. These lights plug into electric wall outlets and light up automatically if there is a loss of power. They will, depending on the type, continue to operate automatically for 1 to 6 hours. They can also be turned off manually and used as a short-lasting flashlight.
- Store high-powered flashlights with wide beams and extra batteries.
- Plan for losing the auditory clues you usually rely on after a major disaster.
- Service animals may become confused, frightened, or disoriented during and after a disaster. Keep them confined or securely leashed or harnessed. A leash/harness is an important item for managing a nervous or upset animal. Be prepared to use alternative ways to negotiate your environment.

Label supplies:

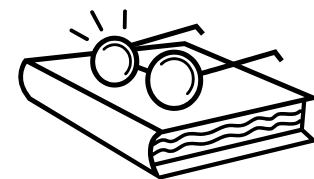
- If helpful, mark emergency supplies with large print, fluorescent tape, or Braille.

Secure computers & furniture:

- Anchor special equipment and large pieces of furniture such as computers and shelving. Create a computer back-up system for important data and store it off site.

Advocacy issues:

- Advocate that TV news not only post important phone numbers, but also announce them slowly and repeat them frequently for people who cannot read the screen.



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