

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 group text or a phone call chain (a plan in which you make an initial call to one person, who then calls the next person, and so on).
- This will make sure that all relatives and friends know what is happening in case of an emergency.

Keep contact information complete and up to date

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

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.

Choose a meeting place in case of evacuation

- Pick two meeting places - one near home and 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.

Get local emergency information in advance

- Get a community disaster/emergency plan for your area.
- Learn where evacuees go for medical care or emergency supplies of medications. Get a map of evacuation zones to keep in your car.

Exercise mock disaster scenarios

- Go over your emergency plan with family and friends and practice to make sure it is ready to be executed if needed.

Consider getting 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.

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.** Include items such as blood sugar monitoring equipment, a blood pressure cuff, hearing aids/hearing aid batteries, and an 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. Carry extra copies of Medicare, Medicaid or other insurance information with you.

Step 3: Make a Disaster Supplies Kit

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

- **Water.** 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.
- **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, battery bank, or solar charger.
- **Maps.** Local and regional maps in case roads are blocked and you need to take detours.
- **Basic hygiene products.** Soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes, sunscreen, hand sanitizer, toilet paper, baby wipes, and a few trash bags for garbage.
- **Change of clothing and blankets.** A complete set of clothing per person: a long-sleeved shirt, long pants, shoes, a coat, and weather appropriate outerwear. Also include one blanket per person.
- **Contact info and key papers.** Have the phone 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.** Keep at least \$50 on hand. If that's not possible, include as much as you can.
- **First aid kit.** See the Red Cross's comprehensive list of what to pack in your first aid kit (<https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/anatomy-of-a-first-aid-kit.html>). The Red Cross also sells pre-packaged first aid kits.