

## EMERGENCY Preparedness for Older Adults

Older Adults are among the most vulnerable when disaster strikes. Help may not be immediately available in the wake of a disaster, and pharmacies, medical supply stores, physicians' offices, and hospitals may be closed or inaccessible. 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

#### AGREE ON A COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

Create a "phone call chain," an arrangement in which you make an initial call to a designated person and they in turn call their designated person and so on. This will ensure that all relatives and friends know what is happening in the event of an emergency.

#### KEEP CONTACT INFORMATION COMPLETE AND UP-TO-DATE

Make sure you have the current home, work, and cell phone numbers of any people you'll need to contact in an emergency. And make sure those people have your phone number, and the numbers of nearby friends or neighbors whom they can contact in case you're unable to answer the phone. Put a copy these numbers in a travel wallet, purses or suitcase, as well.

#### DESIGNATE A MEETING PLACE

In case you're asked 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 the older adult lives in a facility, find out where he or she will be taken in case of evacuation.

#### CONSIDER ORDERING A MEDICAL ID BRACELET

If you or an older adult has a chronic health problem, consider ordering a medical ID bracelet or pendant. Information on medical conditions, such as diabetes or asthma; drug and food allergies; prescribed medicines; and emergency contacts can be engraved onto the surface of these IDs. If you have a very elderly or disabled adult, put his or her identification information, list of diagnoses and medications in a traveler's wallet that he or she can wear in case of emergency.

#### GET LOCAL EMERGENCY AND EVACUATION INFORMATION IN ADVANCE

Ask local authorities if they have a community disaster/emergency plan for your area, and ask where evacuees might turn for medical care or emergency supplies of medications, if necessary. Also, obtain a map of evacuation routes in your area and keep it in your car. In the event of an evacuation, try tuning into local radio stations for evacuation instructions.

#### MAKE TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS IN CASE OF EVACUATION

Talk to family members (or the directors of the facility in which you live) about what you would do in the event of an evacuation. Consider these questions and make necessary arrangements: Will you be able to drive or will you need someone to pick you up? If so, who, and at what meeting place? If that person is unable to reach you, who will provide a back-up ride, and how will that person be contacted? You may also want to ask the director to designate a staffer who will stay with a very elderly adult during the evacuation.

## STEP 2: STOCK AN EMERGENCY KIT

### Every emergency medical kit should include:

Many older adults take medications for chronic health problems such as heart disease and diabetes, so it's essential that they have back-up supplies. Buy ice packs and 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. If you need to leave in an emergency, quickly grab your medications, put them in the bag with the ice packs, and tuck them into an emergency medical kit.

### MEDICAL EQUIPMENT

Include blood sugar monitoring equipment, a blood pressure cuff, hearing aid batteries and any other devices you or loved ones use regularly.

### WRITTEN INFORMATION ABOUT TREATMENT

Ask your doctor for copies of your medical records and lists of:

- any medical problems you have and how they're being treated
- the names (including generic names) of any drugs you're taking and the doses

If you have a very elderly or disabled loved one, carry extra copies of his or her medical and Medicare, Medicaid or other insurance information with you.

### EXTRA NECESSITIES

Pack an extra pair of eyeglasses or hearing aides or dentures, if you wear them.

### LAST MINUTE AD-INS

Such as medications that need to be kept in an insulated bag with ice packs.

## STEP 3: MAKE A DISASTER SUPPLIES KIT

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

### WATER

Pack  $\geq 1$  gallon per person per day, and at least a 3-day supply; a 2-week supply is ideal.

### FOOD

Stock at least a 3-day supply of canned and dried foods and other non-perishables. Juices, soups, and high-protein shakes may be particularly helpful for older adults.

### BASIC SUPPLIES

Include a manual can opener, flashlight, portable radio, batteries, waterproof matches, knife, re-sealable plastic bags, tin foil, disposable cups, plates, utensils, and basic cooking utensils.

### MAPS

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

### CHANGE OF CLOTHING & BLANKETS

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

### PHONE NUMBERS, CONTACT INFO, AND KEY PAPERS

Include numbers and addresses of friends and relatives you might need to contact, physicians and any specialists you see. Also include copies of your credit and identification cards

### CASH

It's a good idea to bring at least \$500; if that's not possible, bring 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](http://www.redcross.org). The Red Cross also sells prepackaged first aid kits.

### BASIC HYGIENE PRODUCTS

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

From the Office of:

Phone Number:

Patient Name:

Notes:

Your Next Appointment: