

Personal Emergency Preparedness (PEP) for Seniors

Disasters, man-made or natural, can happen at anytime, anywhere, and vary in magnitude. Older adults and people with disabilities have unique and special needs during a crisis. Approximately half of those over age 65 have two or more chronic health problems, such as heart disease, diabetes, and Alzheimer's disease. These conditions increase a person's vulnerability during periods of time without food, water, shelter, and adequate rest. People with disabilities have some of the same needs as older adults, but they may also have a wider variety of functional limitations, sometimes requiring more supports, many of which could likely be in short supply during a crisis event.

It is critical that individuals, service providers, and communities actively engage in emergency planning. Each person has a responsibility to prepare for potential crisis and make a plan for how to respond. Providers of long-term services and supports must train staff in all emergency actions (evacuation, lock-down, shelter-in-place). Community leaders and first-responders must be prepared to support the health and safety needs of older adults and people with disabilities, engage these populations in the planning process, and—to the maximum extent possible—provide services and supports in integrated Functional Needs Support Shelters.

The only way to ensure the well-being of older adults and people with disabilities during a crisis is through a “whole-community” approach to preparedness. For information and resources about how to support the needs of older adults and people of all ages with disabilities during an emergency, click on the links below.

<http://www.cdc.gov/aging/emergency/>

<https://www.cdc.gov/aging/emergency/preparedness.htm>

<https://www.cdc.gov/features/older-adult-emergency/index.html>

Individual Preparedness: Best Practices and Resources

Older adults, people with disabilities, and caregivers can take steps to prepare for emergencies. The majority of older adults and people with disabilities live in the community. Many live alone, but require long-term services and supports in order to reside in the community. . Without the appropriate contingencies, mobility limitations, the need for battery or electrically powered medical devices or durable medical equipment or other functional considerations could negatively impact a person during a crisis. However, by examining each person's unique needs, it is possible to create person-centered plans that accommodate these needs and maximize independence.

At a minimum, each individual (with the assistance of his or her caregiver, if necessary) should create a kit of emergency necessities. This should include medication, food, water, batteries or chargers, and any supplies that pets or service animals may need. Individuals should also talk to friends, family, and neighbors to create a support network that can help with communication, transportation, and essential care during periods of time when other community-based services and supports are not available. If available, they should learn the locations of the nearest Functional Needs Support Shelters appropriate to their needs.

Natural disasters, such as hurricanes, tornadoes, and blizzards, may force you to evacuate your home or shelter-in-place at short notice. It is important to know what to do in case of an emergency well before disaster strikes.

If you are an older adult living in the community, you may face some challenges during an emergency. For example, you may have mobility problems, or chronic health conditions, or you may not have any family or friends nearby to support you. Support services that are usually available, such as help from caregivers or in-home health care and meal delivery services, may be unavailable for a period of time. In addition, older adults may experience challenges that come with advanced age, such as hearing or vision problems or cognitive impairment, which may make it difficult to access, understand, and respond to emergency instructions.

You or the person you care for can be prepared for emergency situations by creating a plan, reviewing or practicing it regularly, and keeping an emergency supply kit.



Emergency planning is important for older adults.

Creating a Plan

The first step in preparing for an emergency is creating a plan. Work with your friends, family, and neighbors to develop a plan that will fit your needs.

- Choose a contact person who will check on you during a disaster, and decide how you will communicate with each other (for instance, by telephone, knocking on doors). Consider speaking with your neighbors about developing a check-in system together.
- Create a list of contact information for family members and friends. Leave a copy by your phone(s) and include one in your Emergency Supply Kit.
- Plan how you will leave and where you will go during an evacuation. If you are living in a retirement or assisted living community, learn what procedures are in place in case of emergencies. Keep a copy of exit routes and meeting places in an easy-to-reach place.
- Create a care plan and keep a copy in your Emergency Supply Kit. Try out CDC's easy-to-use [care plan template](#).

Creating an Emergency Supply Kit

After an emergency, you may not have access to clean water or electricity. Make sure you are prepared with your own supply of food, water, and other items to last for at least 72 hours.

- Visit [Ready.gov](#) for a list of basic items to gather for your Disaster Supply Kit.
- Medical-Related Items:
 - A 3-day supply of medicine, at a minimum. If medications need to be kept cold, have a cooler and ice packs available.
 - ID band (full name, contact number for family member/caregiver, and allergies)
 - Hearing aids and extra batteries
 - Glasses and/or contacts and contact solution
 - Medical supplies like syringes or extra batteries

- Information about medical devices such as wheelchairs, walkers, and oxygen including model numbers and vender.
- Documents (Keep physical copies in a waterproof bag and take photos of each document for backup):
 - Your [Care Plan](#)
 - Contact information for family members, doctors, pharmacies and/or caregivers
 - List of all medications, including the exact name of the medicine and the dosage, and contact information for pharmacy and doctor who prescribed medicine
 - List of allergies to food or medicines
 - Copies of medical insurance cards
 - Copies of a photo ID
 - Durable power of attorney and/or medical power of attorney documents, as appropriate.

More Information

- [Emergency Preparedness for Older Adults \(CDC\)](#)
- [Personal Preparedness for Older Adults & Their Caregivers \(CDC\)](#)