



Preparing Your Children for Disasters

Don't be reluctant to talk with your family about the possibility of a disaster.

Thought and action before a disaster hits usually help families react wisely. Use age-appropriate books, news articles and other methods to introduce the topic and talk about how your family can be safer by knowing what to do.

Involve children in the development of a family emergency plan and supply kit.

Discuss and practice your plan as a family. Give children exact steps to follow. Establish a meeting place. For older children, it may be appropriate to let them ask questions and make suggestions. Young children can have a role in this process, too; let them choose band-aids for a first aid kit, help select the family meeting place, or choose pictures of family members to be labeled and included in your supply kit.

Help young children practice dialing emergency numbers.

Use a toy phone to practice dialing, and take turns pretending to ask for help; use this as a chance to discuss when to call for help.

Teach children how to recognize signs of danger.

Make sure they know what smoke detectors and other alarms sound like; talk about keeping doors and windows closed to keep smoke or fumes out of a house; talk about how to get out safely during an emergency.

Help your children to memorize important family information.

They should memorize their family members' names, phone numbers, and address. This includes knowing "Mommy" and "Daddy" have first names, too! Having pictures of all family members can be helpful for reuniting young children with their families, and for easing homesickness. By labeling pictures with parents' names, young children can more easily tell other adults who they are looking for.

Provide basic supplies for a variety of possible situations.

Make sure you keep water and non-perishable food on hand, and consider the need for diapers, formula, and medications. Stock a box with games, books, and hobby materials for sitting out emergencies. Consider placing items like favorite toys, stuffed animals, and blankets in the box; familiar items can help ease fears and reassure children.