

Being Prepared for an Emergency

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None of us like to think about emergencies, but it helps to be prepared. Use this chapter as a guide for preparing for emergencies.

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Preparing for a Medical Emergency

If your child has a medical emergency, call 911 or go to the emergency room at the nearest hospital right away.

A medical emergency is a serious medical condition that results from injury, sickness or mental illness.

A medical emergency is sudden, severe, and needs immediate treatment.

Some examples of possible medical emergencies are when your child:

- Loses consciousness (passes out)
- Has convulsions or seizures
- Has eaten poison of any sort
- Has severe or unusual shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Has severe or unusual vomiting
- Has heavy or sudden bleeding
- Feels sudden, severe or unusual pain or pressure
- Has had a serious fall, car accident, or blow to the head
- Is trying to harm himself or herself, or harm others

Tip:

Make a list of possible emergencies related to your child's condition. Review it with your child's primary care provider (PCP). Ask the PCP to share the list with other on-call providers who may take care of your child during an emergency.

Visiting the Emergency Room

Learn about your child's health plan policies for emergency room visits before an emergency happens. Check the benefits handbook or call a Member Services Representative at the plan for more information.

Remember to call and tell your child's PCP about the emergency. Ask the emergency room staff to send a copy of the record from the visit to your child's PCP.

Emergency Information Form for Children with Special Needs

The following form gives emergency providers the information they need to properly care for your child. Ask your child's primary care provider (PCP) to fill out and sign this form. Give a copy of this form to anyone who may take care of your child in an emergency.

It is very important to **update** the form after any of the following events:

- Important changes in your child's condition or diagnosis
- Any major surgical procedures
- Major changes in medications or dosages
- Changes in health care providers

After updating the form, remember to give new copies to emergency medical services (EMS), your child's providers, and caregivers.

Tip:

You can also find a copy of the **Emergency Information Form** in *Chapter 1*.

Suggestions on where to keep copies of this form:

- **Health Care Provider's Office:** On file with each of the child's health care providers, including specialists.
- **Home:** At the child's home in a place where it can be easily found, such as on the refrigerator.
- **Car:** In the glove compartment of each parent/guardian's car.
- **Work:** At each parent's workplace.
- **Purse/Wallet:** In each parent's purse or wallet.
- **School:** On file with the child's school, such as in the school nurse's office.
- **Child's Belongings:** With the child's belongings when traveling.
- **Emergency Contact Person:** At the home of the emergency contact person listed on the form.
- **Local EMS:** Give to local ambulance services and hospital emergency departments. Keep more copies on-hand to give to emergency service providers during an emergency situation.

Emergency Information Form for Children With Special Needs

Last name:



American Academy of Pediatrics



| | | |
|---------------------|---------|----------|
| Date form completed | Revised | Initials |
| By Whom | Revised | Initials |

| | | | |
|--|---|------------------|-----------|
| Name: | | Birth date: | Nickname: |
| Home Address: | | Home/Work Phone: | |
| Parent/Guardian: | Emergency Contact Names & Relationship: | | |
| Signature/Consent*: | | | |
| Primary Language: | Phone Number(s): | | |
| Physicians: | | | |
| Primary care physician: | Emergency Phone: | | |
| | Fax: | | |
| Current Specialty physician: Specialty: | Emergency Phone: | | |
| | Fax: | | |
| Current Specialty physician: Specialty: | Emergency Phone: | | |
| | Fax: | | |
| Anticipated Primary ED: | Pharmacy: | | |
| Anticipated Tertiary Care Center: | | | |

| | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| Diagnoses/Past Procedures/Physical Exam: | |
| 1. | Baseline physical findings: |
| | |
| 2. | |
| | |
| 3. | Baseline vital signs: |
| | |
| 4. | |
| | |
| Synopsis: | |
| | Baseline neurological status: |
| | |
| | |
| | |

Diagnoses/Past Procedures/Physical Exam continued:

| | |
|--------------|--|
| Medications: | Significant baseline ancillary findings (lab, x-ray, ECG): |
| 1. | |
| 2. | |
| 3. | |
| 4. | Prostheses/Appliances/Advanced Technology Devices: |
| 5. | |
| 6. | |

Management Data:

| | |
|---|-----------------|
| Allergies: Medications/Foods to be avoided | and why: |
| 1. | |
| 2. | |
| 3. | |
| Procedures to be avoided | and why: |
| 1. | |
| 2. | |
| 3. | |

Immunizations

| Dates | | | | | | Dates | | | | | |
|-------|--|--|--|--|--|-----------|--|--|--|--|--|
| DPT | | | | | | Hep B | | | | | |
| OPV | | | | | | Varicella | | | | | |
| MMR | | | | | | TB status | | | | | |
| HIB | | | | | | Other | | | | | |

Antibiotic prophylaxis:

Indication:

Medication and dose:

Common Presenting Problems/Findings With Specific Suggested Managements

| Problem | Suggested Diagnostic Studies | Treatment Considerations |
|---------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

Comments on child, family, or other specific medical issues:

Physician/Provider Signature: _____ **Print Name:** _____


Emergency Response Plan

Talk to your child's primary care provider (PCP) about what to do when an emergency happens.

Create an Emergency Response Plan with your child's PCP, specialty health care, school, and home care providers. Take this plan with you on an emergency room visit and give to emergency medical services (EMS) providers.

The plan may include:

- **Medical information about your child**
- **The name(s), signature(s), and contact information of your child's PCP and other important providers**
- **Where your child should be taken in an emergency**
- **Treatment that should be provided to your child in certain situations (including specific instructions and tips for emergency room staff)**



Before an emergency, give a copy of the **Emergency Response Plan** and **Emergency Information Form for Children with Special Health Needs** to EMS providers in your local area. Keep more copies of the plan on-hand to give to emergency service providers during an emergency situation. Update the form as needed.

Preparing for an Emergency at Home

Make sure emergency medical service providers (EMS) in your community know about your child's condition ahead of time, such as: ambulance, fire, police, and utility companies. Then, in an actual emergency, EMS providers will be more familiar with your child's health needs. Contact them before an emergency happens.

Contacting EMS Services in Your Community

- Your ambulance company may be operated by the fire department or by a private or municipal company. To find the name of the EMS Director or ambulance company, call:

the local fire department

the local police department

the town or city hall

- Ask what level of EMS (basic or advanced life support) is available.

Basic life support (BLS) is provided by an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT-Basic or EMT-B). EMT-Bs are trained to provide the following care:

- Assessing a person's condition
- Providing first aid
- Giving oxygen
- Performing heart and lung revival, called CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation), which can include the use of an automated external defibrillator (AED) to shock the heart back to normal
- Use epi-pens in case of a severe allergic reaction
- Change a trach tube for a person that is having trouble breathing
- Taking a person to the hospital

Tip:

Learn CPR, first aid, and other procedures that could help your child during an emergency.

Preparing for an Emergency at Home

Advanced life support is provided by an EMT-Intermediate and EMT-Paramedic (under the direction of a doctor). In addition to everything an EMT-B can do, they can do the following:

- Give intravenous (IV) fluids
 - Use AEDs to give lifesaving shocks to a stopped heart
 - Use advanced airway techniques and equipment to help a person who has trouble breathing
 - Give some drugs by mouth or by IV
 - Read heart monitoring equipment, such as electrocardiograms (EKGs)
 - Insert breathing tubes (endotracheal intubations)
- Ask your ambulance service if their EMTs have pediatric training and pediatric equipment to perform some of the procedures that your child might need. Ask whether ambulances are staffed by EMT-Basics, paramedics, or both.
 - Call the Regional EMS Council in your area to find other ways to meet your child's needs in an emergency. (See **Health Care** section of ***Family TIES Resource Directory*** for a listing of Regional EMS Councils.)
 - Fill out the **Emergency Information Form for Children with Special Health Needs**. Make copies for all EMS providers.
 - Discuss your child's **Emergency Response Plan** with EMS. The plan can help prepare the EMTs and paramedics for the kinds of medical procedures your child may need in an emergency.

Tip:

Clearly mark your house or apartment number. Then, EMS can easily find your home, even in the dark.

*Check in with your community EMS providers at least once a year. Update your child's **Emergency Information Form** as needed and send them a copy.*

Contacting Police and Fire Departments

- Call your local police and fire departments to give them information about your child's special health care needs. For example, tell them where your child's bedroom is located. Describe the types of life-sustaining medical equipment your child uses. Let them know if your child is verbal or nonverbal, and if your child is able to walk.

Contacting Utility Companies

- Call your local utility (electricity) company if your child has specific equipment that requires electricity (such as a ventilator, nebulizer, kangaroo pump, apnea monitor, or refrigerated medication). You can be put on a priority list to restore electricity as soon as possible in case of a power failure.
- Ask your town's fire department about portable generators. You might need one if your child uses electric equipment. You may also call your child's durable medical equipment (DME) provider or the social work department at the local hospital to learn more about portable generators.

Contacting Public Works and Telephone Companies

- Call the local Department of Public Works office and your local telephone company. Let them know about your child's special needs.
- Ask the public works department to put your street on a priority list for snow removal. This can help make sure an ambulance has quick access to your home in an emergency.
- Ask the telephone company to put you on a priority list. This can help make sure that your phone service will not get completely shut off. Then, you will always be able to call for help if there is an emergency.

Tip:

Ask emergency medical services (EMS) about the **Disability Indicator Enhanced 911 Program**. With this program, a special code will appear on the 911 call-takers screen when 911 is called. The special code will tell EMS that your child will need special help during an emergency.

Contact the Massachusetts Statewide Emergency Telecommunications Board at 781-944-9113, 781-944-5147 (TTY), or visit www.mass.gov/e911/muni.htm.

Sample letters to community providers are available from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. Download them from www.mass.gov/dph/fch/directions or call 800-882-1435 (in MA only), 617-624-5070, or 617-624-5992 (TTY).

Preparing for a Disaster Emergency

Disasters can happen anytime, anywhere, and sometimes without warning. A winter storm could keep your family at home for days. A fire, flood, tornado, or any other disaster could stop water, electricity, and telephone services. You could have to leave your home.

Be prepared for a disaster emergency before it happens. Make a Disaster Supplies Kit for your child and your family. Keep these supplies on hand:

- **Water – a 3-day supply for each household member**
- **Food – a 3-day supply for each household member**
- **First Aid Kit**
- **Essential medications – prescription and over-the-counter**
- **Special equipment and supplies for your child with special needs**
- **Generator, if your child is dependent of machines using electricity**
- **Sanitation supplies (toileting and hygiene)**
- **Flashlight with extra batteries**
- **Radio with extra batteries**
- **Cellular phone with extra battery**
- **Cash**
- **Extra clothing and bedding**
- **Important documents**
- **A copy of the Emergency Information Form for Children with Special Needs**
- **Important phone numbers**
- **Other tools and supplies**

For more information on Disaster Planning, contact the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at 800-480-2520, 800-621-3362 (TTY), or visit www.fema.gov. You can also contact your local American Red Cross Chapter or visit www.redcross.org. Many communities have community emergency or disaster teams that work with FEMA and can give families local help.

Tip:

Keep the phone number of an out-of-state contact person in your Disaster Supplies Kit. Sometimes, it is easier to contact a person out-of-state during a disaster.

Notes

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