

TAKE THE FIRST STEP!

PREPAREDNESS AND PUBLIC HEALTH THREATS: Addressing the Unique Needs of the Nation's Vulnerable Populations



Mothers with Children in the Household

Mothers are always preparing for the unexpected. Their planning skills are put to good use as they juggle daily priorities such as, getting children to school, helping with homework or spending quality time with family. While there are steps all mothers can take to prepare for a public health emergency, there are unique needs mothers with children in the household should consider.

APHA conducted a national preparedness survey of mothers with young children¹. Sixty-one percent reported they had done some emergency planning. Yet when asked about their current state of resources, 16% stated they had only enough food in the home for two or fewer days. Fewer than half (46%) reported enough food supply for three days to one week. Indeed, in the event of a long-term public health emergency, many families would run out of food quickly.

When asked about emergency evacuation plans, only 16% of mothers with young children had considered where they would go if they had to quickly leave their homes. Just fourteen percent of mothers stated they had established a place to meet if the family were evacuated or couldn't return home, and only 13% had a plan for how they would move their children 50 miles or more away.

So what steps can mothers with young children take to prepare for a public health emergency? Following are several questions a mother can ask herself to help her get started:

Step 1: Have I taken an inventory of my home?

- Do I have at least a three-day supply of bottled water, non-perishable foods and essential medications set-aside for each member of my family?

Step 2: Have I taken an inventory of my community?

- Does my town or city have an emergency preparedness plan, including recommendations for evacuation routes, emergency shelters and the location of food banks?
- What are the evacuation procedures for my child's daycare facility or school?

Step 3: Have I made a plan for communicating with my family if we are not together when an emergency happens?

- Have I identified a meeting place outside my home where all family members will meet if we are unable to return home?
- Have I taught my children an emergency phone number that they may call if they are unable to reach me?

¹ Under contract with APHA, Peter Hart Research Associates, Inc. conducted a national survey of 210 mothers with children up to 5 years old, from February 9-13, 2007. At the 95% confidence level, the margin of error is +6.8.

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Step 4: Do I have an emergency preparedness kit?

Mothers with children in the household should have two types of kits: one kit for quick evacuations and the other kit for staying in place for a long period of time.

Kit for quick evacuations²:

This kit should be lightweight and easy to carry so you can "grab & go"

- Photo identification for yourself and your children
- Small amounts of food such as granola bars, bottled water or baby formula
- Important personal documents such as health records or child custody papers
- Small amounts of money in the form of cash or traveler's checks
- List of important phone numbers and a cell phone or phone card
- Copies of keys to your home and car
- Medications and personal hygiene items
- Small toys or books for your children

Kit for 'sheltering in place':

This kit should be stored in a safe, dry place and accessed only during emergencies.

- Non-perishable food such as canned foods, cereal, protein or fruit bars and baby formula, if necessary
- Bottled water: each family member needs one gallon of water per day and should keep at least a three-day supply on hand
- Essential medications such as insulin for diabetics or inhalers for children with asthma
- Essential supplies such as baby diapers, eye glasses and personal hygiene items
- First aid kit
- Manual can opener
- Battery-powered flashlight and radio with spare batteries
- Sealing, plastic bags for waterproofing
- Canned pet food

² Information accessed February 7, 2007 at <http://www.4woman.gov/tools/disaster.cfm>

