

Breastfed Babies Are Ready for Anything!

Emergency Preparedness Checklist for Breastfeeding Mothers

An emergency such as a natural disaster often comes with little warning and very little time to plan. Even when a crisis hits on a more personal level (a house fire or loss of a job, for example) having a plan beforehand helps you cope. Remember that breastfeeding helps you and your baby to be ready for anything!



Discuss the following items with your family. Keep this preparation checklist in a place where you can refer to it easily at a moment's notice.

What emergencies are most likely to occur in your community?

Call your local emergency management office to find out how you can prepare. Identify an escape plan from your home and your community's evacuation routes ahead of time.

Make an emergency kit for your family. Here are some items to think about:

- Water (one gallon per person per day)
- Non-perishable food
- Can opener
- Batteries
- Flashlight
- Radio with batteries
- Candles and lighter
- First-aid kit
- Medications
- Contact information for your healthcare providers
- Money
- Change of clothes and shoes
- Blankets
- Any special items your baby might need
- Sling or wrap to help you breastfeed discreetly in public, if needed

Put together a list of key contact people, including:

- Family members who live with you: _____

- Family members who do not live with you. Decide on a contact person outside your community that everyone will contact in case they are separated and there is no communication in your area.: _____

- International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLCs) in your community (see the "Find a Lactation Consultant Directory" at www.ilca.org)

- Physicians for your baby and your family _____

- Hospital and medical clinics in your community _____

- Breastfeeding is life-saving! This is especially true in an emergency. Breastfeeding your baby is one of the best ways to prepare. Breastfeeding is always sanitary and safe and requires no electricity or water which may be in short supply after an emergency. Should an emergency occur, it is important for you to continue breastfeeding to keep your milk production up and protect your baby against disease and malnutrition.
- When a mother breastfeeds, she releases hormones that help her and her baby relax and stay calm, which is especially important for both you and your baby in a stressful and traumatic situation.
- Breastfeeding helps lower pain levels in babies, so if your baby has become injured, allow him to breastfeed often to help him be more comfortable.
- Breastfeeding mothers can continue to make plenty of milk, even in stressful situations.
- It is sometimes possible for a woman to start breastfeeding again, even if she has already weaned her baby. An IBCLC can help you.
- After a disaster, well-meaning people often donate infant formula. Remember that your milk is the safest food for your baby during an emergency. Lack of clean water to mix with the formula and to clean the bottles can make your baby sick.
- If you are staying in a shelter, tell the shelter workers that you are breastfeeding and ask for a quiet area to feed your baby or express milk. A curtain or partition might be all you need to help you relax so your milk will flow. A sling or wrap can also be used to provide a little privacy, if you desire, and to keep your baby close.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help! Mothers and babies need support, especially after an emergency. Ask emergency workers to help you find an IBCLC or other breastfeeding counselors who can help with your questions and concerns.

