

Prescriptions: Prepare Your Medicine Cabinet for an Emergency

Many people depend on *daily* medications. Nearly half of Americansⁱ take at least one [prescription medication](#); 1 in 4 take three or more.ⁱⁱ

A large-scale natural disaster, such as a hurricane, or other emergency could make it difficult to find an open pharmacy let alone get a prescription filled. You and your family may need to rely on a prepared emergency supply.

If, for example, you or a loved one rely on daily medication to treat or manage a chronic disease, it is in your best interest to prepare your medicine cabinet for an emergency. Here's how:

- Keep *at least* a 7 to 10-day supply of prescription medications. Keep your medications in labeled, childproof containers.
- Keep an up-to-date list of all prescription medications, including dosage amounts and the names of their generic equivalents, your medical supply needs, and known allergies.
- Create a supply of nonprescription medications, including pain and fever relievers, diuretics, antihistamines, and antidiarrheal medications.

Don't let the medications in your emergency supply kit expire. Remove, use, and replace any food and water, medications, and supplies before they expire.

Safe Storage

In the wrong hands, medicines are dangerous. Too often, the wrong hands belong to kids. About 60,000 children are taken to emergency rooms each year because they got into medicines.ⁱⁱⁱ

The threat of medication poisoning in kids and adults is also there in an emergency evacuation when families are forced from their homes and into a shelter, a hotel, or the home of a friend or family. Under stressful circumstances and in unfamiliar surroundings, people can forget to practice safe medication use and storage. Here are three ways you can prepare for and prevent medication poisoning after a disaster.

- Keep all prescription medications and over-the-counter medicines and vitamins, including your emergency supply, [Up and Away](#) and out of the reach and sight of children and pets—this includes medicines in suitcases, purses, and “grab and go” bags.
- Create an Emergency Action Plan that includes important contact information, such as phone numbers for your physician, pediatrician, pharmacist, veterinarian, and the Poison Control Center: 800-222-1222.
- Properly dispose of unused, expired, or contaminated medicines in your medicine cabinet and emergency supply. Discard medications that touched floodwater or have changed in appearance or smell. Contact a pharmacist or healthcare provider if you are unsure about a drug's safety.

For more Prepare Your Health information, tips, and checklists, visit [cdc.gov/prepyourhealth](https://www.cdc.gov/prepyourhealth).

QUICK TIPS

- Find out if laws in your state permit pharmacists to dispense a 30-day refill of medications in an emergency.
- Stay up to date on your immunizations and vaccinations for infections and illnesses such as [tetanus](#) and [seasonal flu](#). Know the date of your last tetanus shot in case of injury in an emergency.
- Learn more about the [Emergency Prescription Assistance Program](#). The EPAP helps people who live in a federally-declared disaster area and do not have health insurance.

Eligible people can receive a free 30-day supply of their medications for as long as EPAP is active. People can also use the program to receive vaccinations or to replace certain medical supplies or some forms of medical equipment that were lost or damaged because of the emergency or while evacuating.

ⁱ <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/drug-use-therapeutic.htm>

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ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.cdc.gov/medicationsafety/protect/campaign.html>