Emergency Preparedness

Background

Problems are a normal part of life. However, for people with diabetes, minor problems can have a major impact on their health if they are not prepared to deal with them. This module contains a discussion on preparing for emergencies and natural disasters.

The key point for this module is:

- It is important for people with diabetes and their families to be prepared for emergencies and natural disasters like hurricanes, snowstorms, and earthquakes.

How to Use This Mini-Lesson

This lesson has resources and questions to lead a small group discussion with people who have diabetes. Incorporate it into an existing class or use it as a stand-alone activity. The discussion can be led by a diabetes educator, health educator, community health worker, peer counselor, or anyone with training and experience leading support groups and group education.

For more information, click here.

About New Beginnings: A Discussion Guide for Living Well with Diabetes

This mini-session was adapted from “Module 6—Problem Solving and Emergency Preparedness,” of the New Beginnings discussion guide. New Beginnings helps support group leaders and diabetes educators lead discussions about the emotional side of living with diabetes. It has activities that help participants develop healthy coping skills. Learn more about Module 6, and the other topics addressed in New Beginnings: A Discussion Guide for Living with Diabetes.
Time needed for discussion: 15 to 20 minutes.

Learning Objectives
By the end of the session, participants will be able to:
- Name at least 3 action steps they can take to prepare for an emergency.

Materials

Handouts (one for each participant)
- *Diabetes Disaster Preparedness* (this is a long document—you may want to provide just a few of the checklists) or *Being Prepared for a Disaster When You Have Diabetes* (an easier-to-read option)

Equipment
- Flipchart or blackboard.

Group Discussion
It is very important for people with diabetes to be able to resolve the problems that might affect their ability to manage their diabetes. Good problem solving skills can help you deal with the unexpected and take care of your health.

Preparing for the Lesson
- Read through the instructions.
- Make copies of the handouts for each participant.

Session Outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Leader Instructions</th>
<th>Talking Points and Discussion Questions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ask:</td>
<td>What are some things you think a person with diabetes needs to do in order to be ready for an emergency?</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Hand out Diabetes Disaster Preparedness or Being Prepared for a Disaster When You Have Diabetes.</em></td>
<td>Make an emergency supply kit.</td>
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<td>Let people know you have diabetes. Wear an ID bracelet or something that will identify you as a person with diabetes.</td>
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<td>Keep emergency supplies of water so you have enough to drink. Stay hydrated.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Keep emergency supplies of food.</td>
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<td>Keep something like glucose tablets or juice that has sugar in it with you at all times to treat low blood sugar.</td>
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<td>Check your feet every day and get help for any cuts or sores.</td>
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<td>Keep a list of all of your medicines, drugstores, doctors, and medical conditions in a zip lock bag.</td>
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<td>Take your medications and check your blood sugar.</td>
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<td>Make a plan for how you will keep in touch with family members. Keep the phone numbers of out-of-town family or friends you can call in case you have trouble reaching people who live near you.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Optional:</strong> Conduct the Preparing for Emergencies Exercise on the following page.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Close the session

- Take final questions.
- Thank the group for their participation.
- Explain homework if applicable (see Homework Exercise below).
- Remind participants about the next session. Ask if they have specific questions or issues they would like to see addressed.
- Ask participants to complete the session evaluation.

Think-Pair-Share Exercise: Preparing for Emergencies

The goal of this activity is for participants to identify tasks they need to complete in order to be ready for an emergency like a natural disaster.

- Ask participants to work in small groups. Give each person a copy of the checklists from Diabetes Disaster Preparedness or Being Prepared for a Disaster When You Have Diabetes.
- Ask participants to review the lists. Identify items they have and items they do not have. Ask participants to identify three things they will do in the next week to get ready for an emergency. (5–10 minutes)
- Ask participants to share their ideas for getting ready for an emergency. (5 minutes)

Homework Exercise

- Ask participants to take the Being Prepared for a Disaster When You Have Diabetes brochure home and complete or review the family communication plan with family members.

Additional Resources

- Diabetes Care During Natural Disasters, Emergencies and Hazards
- Take Charge of Your Diabetes When There’s an Emergency or Natural Disaster
- Diabetes and Emergency Preparedness
Handouts
DIABETES DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

PATIENT INFORMATION

Modern media have made our world seem small. News about events around the world reaches us in minutes. We learn of hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, industrial accidents and terrorist attacks immediately. TV teaches us that any disaster brings chaos to people and their environments.

As a person with diabetes, your daily routine involves schedules and planning. An emergency can seriously affect your health. It may be difficult to cope with a disaster when it occurs. You and your family should plan and prepare beforehand even if the event is loss of electricity for a few hours. The first 72 hours following a disaster are the most critical for families. This is the time when you are most likely to be alone. For this reason, it is essential for you and your family to have a disaster plan and kit which should provide for all your family’s basic needs during these first hours.
BE PREPARED LIST

You should safely store the following medical supplies or have them readily available:

- Copy of your emergency information and medical list
- Extra copies of prescriptions
- Insulin or pills (include all medications that you take daily including over the counter medications)
- Syringes
- Alcohol swabs
- Cotton balls & tissues
- A meter to measure blood sugar
- Blood sugar diary
- Insulin pump supplies (if on insulin pump)
- Strips for your meter
- Urine ketone testing strips
- Lancing device and lancets
- Quick acting carbohydrate (for example, glucose tablets, orange juice, etc.)
- Longer lasting carbohydrate sources (for example, cheese and crackers)
- Glucagon Emergency Kit (if on insulin)
- Empty hard plastic detergent bottle with cap to dispose used lancets and syringes

Other supplies:

- Flashlight with extra batteries
- Whistle/noisemaker
- Extra pair of glasses
- Female sanitary supplies
- Heavy work gloves
- Tools
- Food
- Radio with extra batteries
- Pad/pencil
- Matches / candles
- First-aid kit
- Copy of health insurance cards
- Important family documents
- Water
- Clothing and bedding
- Cell phone

Make sure you have enough supplies for 2 weeks. These supplies should be checked at least every 2 – 3 months. Watch for expiration dates.
HELPFUL HINTS ABOUT INSULIN, PENS, SYRINGES

- Insulin may be stored at room temperature (59° - 86°F) for 28 days.
- Insulin pens in use can be stored at room temperature according to manufacturer’s directions.
- Insulin should not be exposed to excessive light, heat, or cold.
- Rapid acting insulin such as aspart, glulisine, or lispro and short acting insulin such as regular should be clear. Long acting insulin such as glargine or detemir should be clear.
- Insulin that clumps or sticks to the sides of the bottle should not be used.
- Although reuse of your insulin syringes is not generally recommended, in life and death situations, you have to alter this policy. Do not share your insulin syringes with other people.
THINGS TO REMEMBER

Stress can cause a rise in your blood sugar.

Erratic mealtimes can cause changes in your blood sugar.

Excessive work to repair damage caused by the disaster (without stopping for snacks) can lower your blood sugar.

Excessive exercise when your blood sugar is over 250mg can cause your blood sugar to go higher.

Wear protective clothing and sturdy shoes.

Check your feet daily for an irritation, infection, open sores or blisters. Disaster debris can increase your risk for injury. Heat, cold, excessive dampness and inability to change footwear can lead to infection, especially if your blood sugar is high. Never go without shoes.

HOT WEATHER TIPS

• Stay indoors in air-conditioned or fan cooled comfort.
• Avoid exercising outside.
• Wear light colored cotton clothing.
• Remain well hydrated (water, diet drinks).
• Avoid salt tablets unless prescribed by your physician.
• Seek emergency treatment if you feel:
  Fatigue, weakness, abdominal cramps
  Decreased urination, fever, confusion.

You should wear diabetes identification AT ALL TIMES
FOOD ITEMS TO BE STORED

- 1 large box unopened crackers (saltines)
- 1 jar peanut butter
- 1 small box powdered milk (use within 6 months)
- 1 gallon or more of water per day per person for at least one week
- 2 6-pack packages cheese and crackers or 1 jar soft cheese
- 1 pkg. dry, unsweetened cereal
- 6 cans regular soda
- 6 cans diet soda
- 6-pack canned orange or apple juice
- 6 pack parmalat milk
- 6 cans “lite” or water packed fruit
- 1 spoon, fork and knife per person
- Disposable cups
- 4 packages of glucose tablets or small hard candies for low blood sugar
- 1 can tuna, salmon, chicken, nuts per person
- Mechanical can opener

These supplies should be checked and replaced yearly.
FOOD CONSIDERATIONS DURING A DISASTER

1. Food and water supply may be limited and/or contaminated. Do not eat food you think may be contaminated. It may be necessary to boil water for 10 minutes before use.

2. Drink plenty of water.

3. Maintain your meal plan to the best of your ability. Your plan should include a variety of meat/meat substitutes (i.e., peanut butter, dried beans, eggs), milk/milk products, fruits, vegetables, cereal, grains.

4. Limit sugar/sugar-containing foods. These foods include:
   - Jellies, jams, molasses
   - Honey
   - Syrups (fruits canned in sugar syrup, pancake syrup)
   - Tonic (dietetic tonics with less than one calorie per ounce are allowed)
   - Frosted cake
   - Presweetened or sugar-coated cereals
   - Pie, pastry, Danish pastry, doughnuts
   - Chocolate
   - Custards, pudding, sherbet, ice cream
   - Gelatin
   - Soda
   - Cookies, brownies

5. Monitor your blood sugars frequently and record in diary.
6. When reading labels, limit products with these sugar-containing ingredients:
   - Sugar
   - Corn syrup
   - Dextrose
   - Sucrose
   - Corn sweeteners
   - Honey
   - Molasses
   - Brown sugar
   - Fruit syrup

7. Avoid greasy, fried foods.

8. Try to eat meals and snacks at the same time every day. Avoid periods of hunger and overindulgence. The quantity and frequency of your food intake should remain similar day-to-day depending upon your activity level.

9. Increase food and water intake during periods of increased exertion or physical activity by either eating between-meal snacks before activity or by eating additional food with meals.

10. Carry a fast source of sugar with you at all times:
    - 3 glucose tablets
    - 1 small box of raisins
    - 6-7 small hard sugar candies
SICK DAY RULES DURING A DISASTER

1. Always take your insulin or pills on time or close to it. Never omit your insulin unless your doctor has told you otherwise. Insulin is still good if there is no refrigeration. A used or unused bottle of insulin may be kept at room temperature (59° - 86°F) for 28 days. Discard unrefrigerated insulin after 28 days.

2. Keep an extra bottle of each type of insulin you use on hand at all times.

3. Eat within 15 min. or no later than ½ hour after taking your insulin (depending on insulin type) or diabetes medicine. Try to eat on time.

4. Never skip a meal. If you cannot eat solid food because of nausea, vomiting, and/or diarrhea, sip regular coke, eat hard candies, fruit or regular soft drinks instead of following your usual meal plan.

5. Most Important:
   - Do not let yourself get dehydrated.
   - Drink plenty of liquids.
   - In between meal times, sip diet soda.
     (This will not replace food, but can help you be hydrated.)

6. Rest.

7. Check your blood sugar. Notify your doctor if your blood sugar average is over 240mg or if you are ill for 2 days.

8. Test your urine for ketones when:
   - Your blood sugar average is over 240mg.
   - You are vomiting
   - You have symptoms of high blood sugar (increased thirst or hunger than usual, quick weight loss, increased urination, very tired, stomach pain, breathing fast or fruity breath smell).
9. Call your doctor if your ketone test is moderate or high and/or if you have symptoms of high blood sugar (as listed in number 8). You may need more than your usual amount of insulin on a sick day. Your doctor can guide you in this.

If you need medical assistance / or are out of all medications, food, and cannot reach your doctor, immediately:

- Go to the nearest hospital; or
- Contact the police; or
- Contact the American Red Cross; or
- Go to an Emergency Medical Center
Health Tips to Remember

1. Stick to your meal plan.
2. Check your feet and skin everyday.
3. Check your blood sugar at least once a day.
4. Take medicines as prescribed.
5. Wear Diabetes ID.
6. Seek medical help when needed.
7. Stress can cause your blood sugar to rise.
8. Seek shelter from extreme weather.
9. Don’t overexert yourself.
10. Stay hydrated — drink plenty of water.
11. Follow your sick day guidelines.
12. Rest.

Know your Resources

LOCAL
- Emergency Management Office
- Local health department
- Local police and fire department
- Red Cross/Salvation Army

STATE
- Kentucky Office of Homeland Security
  1-866-797-KOHS or 5647
- Kentucky Diabetes Prevention and Control Program 502-564-7996

FEDERAL
- Federal Emergency Management Agency
  1-800-621-FEMA
- National Weather Service
  http://www.nws.noaa.gov
- Centers for Disease Control 1-800-CDC-INFO

Have a Plan! Gather Supplies! Be Informed!

Being Prepared for a Disaster
When You Have Diabetes
Make A Communication Plan

- **Identify family meeting places**
  Within and outside the neighborhood

  Include escape routes — 2 ways out of every room in your house; 2 ways out of your neighborhood

- **Plan how to stay in contact if separated**
  
  E-mails and phone numbers of each family member

  Phone numbers of out-of-town relative or friend for each family member to contact

  Be sure everyone carries coins, a cell phone, or a prepaid phone card

**Family Communications Plan**

- Contact Name:
- Telephone:
- Out-of-State Contact Name:
- Telephone:
- Neighborhood Meeting Place:
- Meeting Place Telephone:

  Dial 9-1-1 for Emergencies

Build a Supply Kit

Supplies should last for 2 weeks

### Basic Supplies
- Water
- Food
- First Aid supplies
- Clothing and bedding
- Battery powered weather radio & flashlight
- Extra batteries
- Important documents
- Cash/Credit Cards

### Diabetes Supplies
- **Fanny pack** for medications/testing supplies — insulated bag (if no refrigerator available)
- **Blood glucose meter** with extra lancets and test strips
- **Medications** including insulin/supplies in original containers or the prescriptions.
- **Glucagon Emergency Kit**
- **Foods to treat hypoglycemia** — Glucose tabs/gels, juice, hard candies, regular sodas
- Comfortable footwear

Take Safety Measures

- Know location of water/gas/electricity shut-offs.
- Be sure to have smoke and/or carbon monoxide detectors and test them monthly.
- Post emergency phone numbers near all phones.
- Organize and practice family drill.

Be Informed

- Know the natural or man-made disasters that might happen in your area.
- Know the location of the fire departments, police stations, and hospitals in your area.
- Learn your community’s warning signals.
Everyone with diabetes should be prepared for emergencies and natural disasters, such as power outages or hurricanes. Always have your disaster kit ready. Include everything you need to take care of your diabetes, such as

- a blood glucose meter, lancets, and testing strips
- your diabetes medicines
- a list of your prescription numbers
- if you take insulin—some insulin, syringes, and an insulated bag to keep insulin cool
- if you take insulin or if recommended by your doctor—a glucagon kit
- glucose tablets and other foods or drinks to treat low blood glucose
- antibiotic cream or ointment
- a copy of your medical information, including a list of your conditions, medicines, and recent lab test results
- phone numbers for the American Red Cross and other disaster relief organizations

You also might want to include some nonperishable food, such as canned or dried food, along with bottled water.

Check and update your kit at least twice a year.