

FACT SHEET:

Disaster Preparation for Families with Children

Assemble a kit for your children

Some suggested items:

- A few favorite books, crayons and paper
- Puzzles, a board game, deck of cards
- Two favorite small toys, such as a doll or action figure, a stuffed animal
- Favorite blanket, pillow
- Pictures of family and pets
- Comfort food/snack items
- Other special items that will comfort children

Children's fears can stem from their active imaginations, and adults should take these feelings seriously. An adult's words and actions can provide reassurance to a child who feels afraid. When talking to children, be sure to present a realistic picture that is both honest and manageable. Be aware that after a disaster, children most fear that:

- They will be separated from family.
- The event will happen again.
- Someone will be injured or killed.
- They will be left alone.

Children's immunizations should be up-to date as early in life as possible to protect from vaccine-preventable diseases, including an unexpected outbreak during a disaster.

- Keep a copy of your children's complete immunization records in your disaster kit
- Record the date of family members' last Tetanus-diphtheria shot in this record as well.

Communicating With Children About Disaster

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) offers some advice on communicating with children and adolescents during times of crisis. The AAP says, "it is important to communicate to children that the family circle is strong. Children need to be assured by their parents that the family is safe. Adolescents, in particular, can be hard hit by this type of disaster. Parents may watch for signs such as sleep disturbances, fatigue, lack of pleasure in activities previously enjoyed, and illicit substance abuse."

Overexposure to the media can be traumatizing. It is best not to let children or adolescents repeatedly view footage of traumatic events. Children and adolescents should not view these events alone. Adults need to help children understand the emergency or disaster. Discussion and open communication is critical. More information is available at www.aap.org. For more information, please contact your local county health department or the Department of Children and Families (DCF) office nearest you.