

Preparing Your Medicine Cabinet for an Emergency: A Checklist from the CDC

Posted on October 16, 2017 by CDR Ibad Khan, Pharmacist, Division of Emergency Operations, Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response

“Make a kit. Have a plan. Be informed.”

You are probably familiar with the important items you should keep in your emergency kit – water, food, a flashlight, and a battery-powered radio.

What you may not think about is personalizing your kit for your unique medical needs or the needs of your family. Particularly, including prescription medications and other medical supplies in your emergency kit and plans.

Here are 10 pointers about how to prepare your medications for an emergency so you can decrease the risk of a life-threatening situation.

1. **Make a list.** Keep a list of all your medications and the dosages in your emergency kit. Make sure you have the phone numbers for your doctors and pharmacies.
2. **Have your card.** Keep your health insurance or prescription drug card with you at all times so your pharmacy benefits provider or health insurance plan can help you replace any medication that was lost or damaged in a disaster.
3. **Keep a record.** Make copies of your current prescriptions and keep them in your emergency kit and/or go bag. You can also scan and email yourself copies, or save them in the cloud. If you can't reach your regular doctor or your usual pharmacy is not open, this written proof of your prescriptions make it much easier for another doctor to write you a refill.
4. **Start a stockpile.** During and after a disaster you may not be able to get your prescriptions refilled. Make sure you have at least 7 – 10 days of your medications and other medical supplies. Refill your prescription as soon as you are able so you can set aside a few extra days' worth in your emergency kit to get you through a disaster.
5. **Storage matters.** Keep your medications in labeled, child-proof containers in a secure place that does not experience extreme temperature changes or humidity. Don't forget to also include nonprescription medications you might need, including pain relievers, cold or allergy medications, and antacids.
6. **Rotate the date.** Don't let the medications in your emergency supply kit expire. Check the dates at least twice every year.
7. **Prioritize critical medicines.** Certain medications are more important to your health and safety than others. Prioritize your medications, and make sure you plan to have the critical medications available during an emergency.
8. **Communicate a plan.** Talk to your doctor about what you should do in case you run out of a medication during an emergency. If you have a child who takes a prescription medication, talk to their daycare provider or school about a plan in case of an emergency.
9. **Plan ahead.** Make sure you know the shelf life and optimal storage temperature for your prescriptions, because some medications and supplies cannot be safely stored for long periods of time at room temperature. If you take a medication that needs to be refrigerated or requires electronic equipment plan ahead for temporary storage and administration in an emergency situation.
10. **Check before using.** Before using the medication in your emergency kit, check to make sure the look or smell hasn't changed. If you are unsure about its safety, contact a pharmacist or healthcare provider before using.

Resources

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [Gather Emergency Supplies](#)
- Express Scripts: [Emergency Preparedness for Prescription Medications](#)

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