

# Emergency Preparedness for Older Adults



A disaster or an emergency can happen at any time, sometimes without warning. Thankfully, there are things you can do to be prepared, to respond safely and help speed your recovery. This guide is designed to give you some practical tips about how to plan and prepare for your needs in a disaster or an emergency.

## BEFORE: Prepare and get ready now

### Get informed



**Identify likely disasters:** Know the types of disasters that could happen in your community.



**Learn about community response plans:** Find out about local plans for emergency alerts, evacuation and shelter resources.



**Sign up** for alerts and warnings to receive information during an emergency.



**Get trained:** Learn first aid, CPR and specific actions you can take to help protect yourself from the impact of local disasters.

### Assess your needs



**Understand** how your medical, physical and cognitive needs may affect your ability to respond to an emergency.



**Think about how you would respond:** Consider needs you may have if the power went out, you had to stay home for two weeks or more, or if you had to evacuate your home or community.



**Talk** about the help you may need and who could assist you.

### Build your support network



**Identify helpers:** Include family, friends, neighbours, carers and health professionals to build your network of people who may be able to assist you or that you can assist.



**Meet** with your carers to assess your needs and plan together.



**Plan** how you will communicate with carers.

## BEFORE: Prepare and get ready now

Review, practice and refresh your plan, supplies and important documents every six months.

### Develop your plan

- **Plan to stay or go:** Plan to stay home for at least two weeks or evacuate.
- **Help to evacuate:** If you need help evacuating, plan who will help you. Find out if there are local registries and sign up.
- **Power needs:** If you require power to operate medical devices or keep medicines cold, make a back-up plan.
- **Fire safety:** Identify how you will exit every room to escape a home fire and plan for the help you may need.
- **Property or renter's insurance:** Make sure you have a policy that meets your property and disaster coverage needs.

### Create an emergency contact list

- **Make an emergency contact list** to plan how you will reach your support group and important emergency contacts when communications may be disrupted.

### Gather your supplies

- **Get basic emergency supplies for everyone in your household, including pets:** Use a checklist to prepare what you will need in your home, car or when you evacuate.\*
- **Have batteries** to back-up power-dependent devices.
- **Manage medical and personal needs:** Keep extra medications and extra assistive items such as a cane or eyeglasses. Talk to your pharmacist or healthcare provider to determine how many months you are allowed to get in advance. Plan for your food needs if you follow a special diet.

### Prepare your documents

- **Locate important documents:** Use a checklist\* to collect and copy documents including identifications, financial, legal and medical papers you'll need after a disaster.
- **Keep current list of medical information:** Conditions, allergies, medications, prescription records, doctors and insurance cards.

## DURING: Know how to respond

### Develop your plan

- **Stay informed:** Monitor the news and emergency alerts for updates and guidance.
- **Stay or go?** Be ready to stay at home or leave quickly. Know how you will decide and who will help.
- **Ask for help:** Tell people what you need.

## AFTER: Know how to recover

### When the emergency is over

- **Let friends and family know you are safe.** Start with your contact list and share where you are staying and how to reach you.
- **Return home safely:** Wait until authorities say it is safe to return.
- **Work with trusted sources:** The Canadian Red Cross, your local government and your support network can help. Beware of scams.
- **Manage property damage:** Contact your insurance company. They can provide guidance on how to document any property damage and next steps to help mitigate loss.

\*Download the Canadian Red Cross Emergency Checklist and find other resources and information at: [www.redcross.ca/ready](http://www.redcross.ca/ready)