

Disaster preparation for families with children

Children's fears come from their imaginations, and you should take their feelings seriously. Your words and actions can go a long way towards helping a child who feels afraid.

When talking to your child, be sure to present a picture that is honest. Be aware that after a disaster, children most fear that:

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

Work with your child to assemble a disaster supplies kit, including:

- 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
- Other special items that will comfort children

Make sure your children's immunizations are up-to date to protect them from diseases or an unexpected outbreak during a disaster.

- Keep a copy of your children's immunization records in your family disaster kit

Communicating with children about disasters

Here is some advice for talking with children and adolescents during a crisis.

- Children need you to assure them that the family is safe. Make sure children see and understand that the family circle is strong.
- Older children and teenagers in particular can be hard hit by a disaster. Some children may need to see a doctor or counselor for more help.
- Watch for signs such as sleep disturbances, fatigue, extreme sadness and use of drugs or alcohol.
- Help children understand what happened. Discussion is critical.
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For more information, please contact your health care provider or local county health department or visit www.doh.state.fl.us or www.FloridaDisaster.org.

The Florida Emergency Information Line: 1-800-342-3557

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