

Preparing for Emergencies When You Have Diabetes

By Martha Zimmer | June 23, 2015 1:00 pm

The recent flooding in Texas brought home to me again how important it is for those of us with diabetes to be prepared for emergencies[1].

Blizzards, tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, and other emergencies can and do happen. These natural disasters make us aware of how vulnerable we are, and even more so when we are living with a chronic condition. Everyone needs to have an emergency kit ready, but because of our diabetes there are things we must include that others do not need.

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I will never forget watching the reports when people were stranded after the disastrous Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans in 2005. Older people with medical conditions like diabetes were among those most likely not to survive.

How can you as a person with diabetes prepare for natural disasters? I visited many websites and made a list of the things they all agreed upon.

The first thing on every list was water. Most disaster preparedness sites say to have at least a three-day supply of water in your home. Some say to carry water in your car as well, in case you get stranded.

Batteries, flashlights, and first-aid supplies are on everyone's list. Dry goods and canned food are also included.

With diabetes, we need to make sure we have some foods that are diabetes friendly. On top of that we should have a supply of glucose tabs, hard candies, and/or soda with sugar for treating low blood sugars.

You will also need a diabetes emergency kit. What should be included? Most sites suggest three days' worth of diabetes supplies kept in a waterproof container. Two or three clear sealable bags nested one inside the other work well because you can see what is inside.

Put in some syringes and needles, a pain reliever like aspirin or acetaminophen, a medication for diarrhea, and something for cold and flu that is diabetes friendly. Add some extra test strips and lancets, a backup glucose monitor, any oral medicines you may take, and possibly an extra glucagon kit.

Write down your emergency contacts, including doctors and family members, and include a list of your medications and medical problems. Put the list inside the kit.

If you are on an insulin pump, you should include extra batteries as well as some syringes and insulin in case the pump stops working. All insulin users should also have a cool pack for supplies.

There is a great product called Frio that is activated by cold water and keeps insulin cool for more than two days. It can be reused many times by simply putting it in cold water again for a few minutes. A cooling case is great when you have no electricity to keep your insulin from getting too hot.

Do you wear a diabetic alert bracelet[2]? If you are caught in an emergency situation, your medical alert jewelry could save your life. The time to get one is long before you will need it, so if you do not have at least one bracelet or necklace, please get it now.

Thinking about disasters and emergency kits is not enjoyable, but if you know you are prepared, you will feel less stress during an unexpected event. Having diabetes forces you to think ahead, making you less likely to panic. There is value in that.

Remember, it is a good idea to check your blood sugar more often in stressful situations. And keep taking your medications as you always do.

Make an emergency kit for your home, another for your car, and one for work too. Use a container that makes it easy to identify so you or someone else can find it. The kit will have to be checked yearly so you can replace expired medications and foods.

Are there things you do to prepare for an emergency that are not on this list? Please add them to the comments below. I hope you make a diabetes emergency kit, and I hope you never have to use it.

Is diabetes communicable? Bookmark [DiabetesSelfManagement.com](http://www.diabetesselfmanagement.com)[3] and tune in tomorrow to hear the surprising results of a new study from nurse David Spero.

Endnotes:

1. be prepared for emergencies: <http://www.diabetesselfmanagement.com/managing-diabetes/general-health-issues/disaster-preparedness/>
2. diabetic alert bracelet: <http://www.diabetesselfmanagement.com/blog/medical-alert-jewelry-for-diabetes/>
3. DiabetesSelfManagement.com: <http://www.DiabetesSelfManagement.com>

Source URL: <http://www.diabetesselfmanagement.com/blog/preparing-for-emergencies-when-you-have-diabetes/>

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