

# Caregiver Assistance News

“CARING FOR YOU...CARING FOR OTHERS”

## Emergencies—Be Ready

### Gather Emergency Supplies

Weather emergencies and natural disasters can strike anywhere. Prioritize the needs of those in your care, then take steps to provide for those needs in case of an emergency. Store a minimum of 3 days' worth of:

**Water** The average person requires at least 1 gallon of water a day for drinking, food preparation and basic hygiene. Always keep ice on hand; in the event of a power outage, ice in the freezer will keep things cool longer. You can use ice in a cooler chest to keep essentials cool for a day.



**Medications** Prescription and over-the-counter medications and medical supplies (syringes, catheters) should be replenished at least 3 days BEFORE they are used up. For essential maintenance meds, keep a 1-week “buffer” supply. For medications that need to be refrigerated (like insulin), buy a small cooler chest for emergency storage.

**Food** If the person in your care requires special foods (Ensure, diabetic foods), make sure you have at least a 3-day supply of these and other non-perishable food. Use and replace them frequently to keep them fresh.

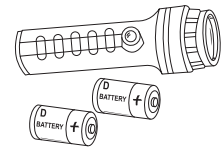
**Pets and service animal supplies** Keep a 3-day supply of pet food and water.

### Emergency Supplies Kit\*

**Lists:** prescription medications, dosage, and allergies; doctors and emergency contacts; the style and serial numbers of medical devices such as pacemakers.

**Copies:** medical insurance, Advance Directives, Medicare cards, Social Security, ID.

- Extra eyeglasses and hearing-aid batteries, wheelchair batteries or other special equipment.
- Flashlight, battery-operated radio, fresh batteries, extra blankets, work gloves, sturdy shoes, a manual can opener, eating utensils and a whistle.
- Extra clothing and incontinence supplies.
- Cell phone with rechargers and extra cash.



\*Visit websites listed on p.3 for detailed lists.

### Those With Special Needs

An elderly person or a person with disabilities may face some special challenges if an emergency strikes. Caregivers can help them learn about the challenges that they may face and help them prepare ahead of time. Then they will be better able to cope with the disaster and recover from it more quickly.

Source: National Organization on Disability [www.nod.org](http://www.nod.org); Ready.gov; [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov); [www.disasterassistance.gov](http://www.disasterassistance.gov); [redcross.org](http://redcross.org)

## Heat Wave Survival Tips

In recent years, excessive heat has caused more deaths than all other weather events, including hurricanes, lightning, tornados, floods, and earthquakes combined, according to the American Red Cross. When we are exposed to high temperatures and high humidity, our bodies lose water and salt as we perspire to stay cool. This can lead to heat cramps. If not addressed, dehydration can lead to *heat exhaustion*. Heat exhaustion leads to *heatstroke*, a potentially life-threatening condition.



The elderly, and people with chronic diseases (like heart or lung diseases) are most at risk of developing heat cramps, heat exhaustion, or heatstroke. Those taking diuretics (water pills) and beta blockers are at special risk.

Early signs of heat-related illness include fatigue, thirst, muscle cramps and profuse sweating.

### Symptoms of Heat Exhaustion

- dizziness and lightheadedness
- weakness
- headache
- nausea and vomiting
- cool, moist skin
- dark urine

### Symptoms of Heatstroke

- fast, shallow breathing
- pulse is fast and weak
- confusion and strange behavior
- fever
- skin is red, hot, and dry
- seizures
- loss of consciousness

### First Aid for Heat-Related Illness

- Take the victim to a cool place.
- Have them lie down with their feet up.
- Apply cool, wet cloths (or cool water alone) to their skin. Cold compresses can also help.
- If the person is conscious, have them drink water or a salted drink. Do not offer drinks that contain alcohol or caffeine.

### When to Call 9-1-1

Call 9-1-1 if the person has blue lips and fingernails, a high fever, difficulty breathing, a seizure, is confused or behaving irrationally, or has lost consciousness.

## Older Bodies Need More Water

As people age, they feel less thirsty and must make a special effort to drink fluids. Fluid balance can be affected by medication, emotional stress, exercise, nourishment, general health and the weather.

Remember, air-conditioning is one of the best protections against heat-related illness and death. Visit senior centers, movie theaters, libraries or malls to cool off—even for just a few hours.

Source: Environmental Protection Agency [www.epa.gov/aging](http://www.epa.gov/aging)



## Taking Care of Yourself—How To Manage Frustration

It's a fact of life: the people closest to us are the same ones who best know how to "push our buttons." Feeling frustrated or resentful toward the people you live with, work with, or care for is a stressful and unhealthy situation, both for you and for others. Instead of letting negative feelings "simmer" or, worse, giving in to angry or unkind words and actions, take a time out to be grateful for the very people who can drive you nuts. The people in our lives are there because we value and appreciate them. Every time you're tempted to wish them out of your life, imagine losing all the good they bring into your life as well as the "bad." Let a feeling of gratitude fill you and frustration evaporates.



Source: *Happiness in this World*; [www.happinessinthisworld.com](http://www.happinessinthisworld.com)

**Note** Keep a shut-off wrench near the gas and water shut-off valves at home.

Source: CDC

## Inspiration

*Expect nothing.  
Live frugally on surprise.  
~ Alice Walker*

### Disaster Help

For comprehensive supplies checklists and after-disaster help, visit:

- ▶ FEMA [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)  
[www.disasterassistance.gov](http://www.disasterassistance.gov)
- ▶ American Red Cross  
[www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)

### Don't Fall—Be Safe Fallen Before?

Write down the details, including when, where and how the person in your care fell. Note instances when he or she almost fell as well. These details may help a doctor or occupational therapist identify specific fall-prevention strategies.

*The Comfort of Home*®

### **Our Purpose**

To provide caregivers with critical information enabling them to do their job with confidence, pride, and competence.

### **Ordering Info**

From the publishers of

*The Comfort of Home*®  
Caregiver Series

#### **available from...**

CareTrust Publications LLC  
PO Box 10283, Portland, OR 97296  
800-565-1533  
or [www.comfortofhome.com](http://www.comfortofhome.com)

Comments and suggestions welcome.

©2013 CareTrust Publications LLC.

All rights reserved. Reproduction of any component of this publication is forbidden without a license from the publisher.

Some content in this publication is excerpted from *The Comfort of Home: Caregivers Series*. It is for informational use and not health advice. It is not meant to replace medical care but to supplement it. The publisher assumes no liability with respect to the accuracy, completeness or application of information presented or the reader's misunderstanding of the text.

## **SAFETY TIPS**

### **What If You Are Delayed or Injured?**

If you are responsible for the regular care of another person, what happens if you can't be there? An accident or medical emergency can happen to anyone, at any time. It is important that emergency personnel (police, fire department and/or emergency room professionals) know that you are a caregiver and that someone is counting on you for their health and safety. To ensure the well-being of the person you care for, **always carry an emergency ID card in your wallet that identifies you as a caregiver.** On the card, list the name and location of the care recipient; your relationship to the person; an alternative caregiver or family member and their phone number; additional information on the person's medical condition and needs; and a message indicating whether the person in your care is OK to be left alone.

Place an Emergency File Card on your refrigerator with the same information. Paramedics are trained to look at the refrigerator for information on you.

Source: [SeniorNavigator.org](http://SeniorNavigator.org)

# Caregiver Assistance News

“ C A R I N G F O R Y O U ... C A R I N G F O R O T H E R S ”

## Q U I C K Q U I Z

Natural disasters often strike in summer. You might not have access to food, water, or electricity. By taking time now to prepare emergency water supplies, food supplies and a disaster supplies kit, you can provide for the person in your care. Answer True or False to the questions below.

1. The average person requires at least 1 gallon of water a day for drinking, food preparation and basic hygiene.  
T F
2. A one day supply of special food should be adequate.  
T F
3. Medicines should be replenished at least 3 days BEFORE they are used up.  
T F
4. Always keep a shut-off valve wrench near the gas and water shut-off valves in your home.  
T F
5. In recent years, excessive heat has caused more deaths than all other weather events, including hurricanes, lightning, tornados, floods, and earthquakes combined.  
T F
6. Call 9-1-1 if the person has blue lips and fingernails, a high fever, difficulty breathing, a seizure, is confused or behaving irrationally, or has lost consciousness.  
T F
7. People with chronic diseases (like heart or lung diseases) are most at risk of developing heat cramps, heat exhaustion, or heatstroke.  
T F
8. Air-conditioning is one of the best protections against heat-related illness and death.  
T F
9. Those taking diuretics (water pills) and beta blockers never get heat related illness.  
T F
10. Fluid balance can be affected by medication, emotional stress, exercise, nourishment, general health and the weather.  
T F

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_