

Your medical hurricane prep checklist

July 15 2022, by Dipali Pathak



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While a hurricane preparation checklist for anyone in a hurricane zone should cover basic needs for several days, those with health conditions may need additional items and should keep certain considerations in mind when deciding whether to evacuate. Dr. James McDeavitt, executive vice president and dean of clinical affairs at Baylor College of Medicine, explains.

"Part of preparedness is having a plan," McDeavitt said. "You don't want to make that plan as the hurricane is barreling down the coast. You need to prepare now, when the sun is out and the weather is clear."

Something important to consider is deciding whether or not to evacuate. This depends in large part on how dependent you are on others or on technology for your care.

Individuals who rely on equipment in their home, such as ventilators or CPAP machines, and anyone who is frail, elderly or has a disability should consider where they will go if a hurricane is approaching.

"The sicker you are, the more dependent you are on others for care and the more dependent you are on technology for your care, the better off you are evacuating early if you can do so safely," McDeavitt said. "That means getting out well ahead of the weather event. The danger is you get caught up in the last-minute rush to evacuate and you end up stuck on the highway."

Many state and [local governments](#) provide online [hurricane](#) resources updating areas at risk and evacuations routes. People should become familiar with those resources in advance of a crisis.

McDeavitt emphasized that for those at risk, getting out early is a good

idea and leaving at the last minute probably is a bad idea. It is a good idea to familiarize yourself with emergency shelter options in your community, in the event of worst-case scenario.

If you rely on durable [medical equipment](#) (DME)—for example, oxygen cylinders—include your DME provider in your emergency planning. Likewise, if you rely on home health services or dialysis, they should be included in your advanced planning as well.

Those who are dependent on equipment in their home and decide to weather the storm should be sure that they have an emergency generator, and know what public emergency shelter options are available.

Here are some other items McDeavitt suggests having on hand:

- A supply of clean water, sufficient to last for 2–3 days, is critical for everyone
- Anyone with [prescription medications](#) should get refills ahead of the storm
- Individuals with [chronic illness](#) should have enough supplies to manage the illness for a 5-to-7-day period
- Those with [medical conditions](#) that are sensitive to [dietary intake](#), such as diabetes or borderline congestive heart failure, should have appropriate food on hand
- Maintain a very basic first aid kit—band aids, sterile gauze, over-the-counter anti-diarrheal medication and antibiotic ointment

Because part of health is maintaining connection and being safe, McDeavitt also suggests keeping backup batteries, a radio and backup power for your cell phone on hand. In advance of a major weather event, familiarize yourself with reliable sources of information regarding emergency alerts.

Anyone who is immune compromised or vulnerable for complications from COVID should be sure they are vaccinated and boosted and should consider wearing a mask in crowded places if they have to evacuate from their home during the storm.

Provided by Baylor College of Medicine

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