

## GUIDELINES FOR PREGNANT WOMEN DURING A DISASTER

Disaster situations can be very stressful. The Florida Department of Health-In Orange County cares about you and your baby. Please follow the guidelines below to help you and your baby be healthy and safe.

### Before an event:

- Be sure to have an enough food and water to last at least **seven days**.
- Know where to go for safe shelter.
- Notify your family members to let them know where you will be.
- If you need to leave the area to be safe, take a copy of your medical records, and a two- week supply of any medications you are taking, including prenatal vitamins.

### After an event:

There will be a period of cleanup and recovery. This is the time when you must be very careful not to become dehydrated and/or over-tired. Heavy labor and dehydration can contribute to premature labor.

### To prevent dehydration and exhaustion follow these suggestions:

- Drink plenty of water or beverages that do not contain alcohol or caffeine.
- Bathe when you can. Try to stay in the shade as much as possible. If you have to be outside in the heat, bring water and a hat or umbrella to provide shade if they are available.
- Do not lift heavy objects.
- Be sure you do not over tire yourself, take frequent rests.
- Try to eat a healthy diet as soon as possible. Sometimes stress causes you to eat too much, not enough, or choose “comfort” foods that are less healthy; try to limit these choices.

### To decrease stress:

- Try to lie down on your left side three times a day, even if only for 10-15 minutes.
- Take deep breaths from your belly. You should see your stomach rise with each breath.
- Find a buddy to discuss your fears and concerns.
- If you ever feel like harming yourself or your baby, talk to a health care provider immediately or visit [www.call211.org](http://www.call211.org) for more information on services in your area.

**PRETERM OR EARLY LABOR** starts more than three weeks before your baby is due. Preterm labor can happen to anyone, yet the risk is greater for women who are:

- Dehydrated
- Under stress
- Have had a previous premature birth
- Overweight or underweight
- Smoking

- Drinking alcohol
- Taking drugs that have not been prescribed by your health care provider

Please remember a contraction does not have to hurt or be painful. It is normal to have some contractions when you first lie down, have a full bladder, after you walk up or down stairs or engage in sex. It is not normal to have regular, frequent contractions before your baby is due.

You should call your health care provider or a hospital right away if you experience any of the following signs of preterm labor:

- Contractions, when your tummy tightens like a fist every 10 minutes or more often
- A change in vaginal discharge such as leaking fluid or any bleeding
- Pelvic pressure, or a feeling like your baby is pushing down
- Low dull backache or cramps that feel like your period might be starting
- Diarrhea with contractions

If you wait too long to get medical attention, your baby could be born too early. When you speak to a health care provider, be sure to ask when to call back if your symptoms do not go away.

Remember it is important to continue your prenatal care.

If your health care provider's office is closed, or you have had to move due to a storm, you can call a local hospital, county health department, or Healthy Start Coalition to get information about prenatal care and the location of hospitals.

**For more information, contact the Family Health Line at 1-800-451-2229.**

Representatives are available Monday through Friday between 8 a.m. and 11 p.m., and on Saturday and Sunday between 10:30 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. *This is not an emergency call line.* For more information on family planning, please visit [www.floridahealth.gov](http://www.floridahealth.gov).