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## Evacuating with infants in an emergency - Advice for parents and carers

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### Summary

- If you are formula feeding an infant, prepare an emergency kit in case you need to evacuate in an emergency.
  - If you are caring for an infant and there is an emergency, evacuate early if you can.
  - If emergency services advise you to evacuate, do so immediately.
  - If you are expressing breastmilk you may need to hand express during an emergency if you do not have access to power or clean water. You can learn how to do this in advance.
  - Bottle-fed infants can be taught to drink from a cup if you do not have enough clean and sterilised bottles and teats to last 3 days.
  - For an infant who is eating solids, pack enough non-perishable foods for 3 meals and snacks per day, as well as spoons and bottled water.
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Due to the vulnerability of infants and the large amount of supplies required to safely formula feed infants in situations where there is no access to power or clean water, it is recommended that all infants and their carers evacuate early or immediately when advised by emergency services.

### Evacuating with infants in an emergency: what to pack

If an emergency situation requires you to evacuate your home, it is advised that you pack three days' worth of supplies for each of your family members. The information below is designed to assist carers of infants to prepare for an evacuation and assumes that during an evacuation there will be no access to power or clean water.

#### Items to pack for all infants

- A baby carrier
- Enough clothes for three days
- Nappies, wipes and disposable bags for three days (approx. 30 nappies, 30 bags and 80 wipes)
- Comfort items (e.g. blanket, dummy/pacifier)
- Activity items such as books, games and toys
- Bedding
- Hand sanitiser

#### Additional items for breastfeeding infants

Mothers who are exclusively breastfeeding do not need to pack additional supplies for their infant. The stress associated with an emergency situation will not stop mothers from making milk but can inhibit the let-down reflex, mothers should encourage infants to keep suckling until milk is released. Breastfeeding mothers have additional water intake requirements and should make sure that they pack enough bottled drinking water for three days.

- Enough bottled drinking water for the breastfeeding mother for three days (approx. 9 litres).

#### Additional items for infants fed expressed breastmilk

Mothers who express breastmilk should be aware that in an emergency situation there may be no access to electricity or mains water to operate electric breast pumps or properly clean hand pumps. To prepare for an emergency, mothers can learn how to hand express breastmilk, the Maternal and Child Health Hotline and the Australian Breastfeeding Association can assist women to learn this skill (see contact details at the end of this document).

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Mothers who express breastmilk are advised to pack the following items in their emergency kit as part of their preparedness for emergencies:

- Single use plastic or paper cups for expressed milk (allow one for every feed, this may be up to 27 cups)
- Enough bottles and teats to have a new one for every feed, these should be washed, sterilised, dried and sealed in a zip lock bag (note: for young infants this may be up to 27 bottles and 27 teats)
- A copy of 'Breastfeeding: expressing a storing breastmilk' booklet, available from the [\*\*Australian Breastfeeding Association's website\*\*](#)

#### **Additional items for formula fed infants**

As access to clean, hot water cannot be guaranteed in an emergency situation, those caring for formula-fed infants are advised to pack an emergency kit as part of their preparedness for emergencies. The below items can be packed into a lidded plastic box, the inside of the lid can act as a preparation area.

- Unopened tin of infant formula (enough for three days' worth of feeds)
- Enough bottles and teats to have a new one for every feed, these should be washed, sterilised, dried and seals in a zip lock bag (note: for young infants this may be up to 27 bottles and 27 teats)
- Enough 250mL bottles of still drinking water for making up the formula (note: this may be up to 24 bottles)
- Large containers/bottles of water for washing hands and preparing area (6 litres)
- Detergent for washing hands and the preparation area (1 small bottle)
- Paper towel (2 or 3 ply) to dry hands and the preparation area (may need up to 200 sheets)

#### **Cup feeding infants in emergencies**

Feeding bottles and teats can be difficult to clean and sterilise in an emergency situation. If you are preparing to evacuate and do not have enough clean and sterilised bottles and teats to last three days (this could be up to 27 bottles and 27 teats), bottle fed infants can be taught to drink from a cup. Open cups are the safest to use. For a young infant you can use a small plastic disposable cup (e.g. a medicine cup).

How to cup feed – adapted from the [\*\*Australian Breastfeeding Association website\*\*](#)

- It is important not to lay your baby back because this can cause choking and spluttering, with aspiration (breathing in) of some milk
- Only cup-feed infants when they are fully awake and alert
- Wrap up small babies to gently restrain their hands, or hold older babies in a position so that they cannot reach for the cup
- Sit baby upright in your lap and hold them firmly with your spare arm and hand
- With the cup about half full, hold it so that it is just touching baby's mouth and reaches the corners of their mouth, resting it only lightly on their lower lip
- Start by allowing baby just a tiny sip to encourage them
- Do not pour the milk into a babies mouth; tip it just enough so that baby can lap it themselves, bringing their tongue forward to do so
- Keep the cup in this tilted position
- Do not take the cup away when baby pauses, unless baby pulls away
- Let baby start again when they are ready and let them set their own pace
- Follow baby's cues. They should be in control of how much milk they take at a time
- Cup-feeding may seem slow and messy to begin with but gets easier with time and practice

#### **Complementary foods for infant who eat solids**

- Enough non-perishable foods for three days (three meals and snacks)
- Bottled still drinking water for infants over 6 months of age (allow 1.5 litres)
- Baby spoons or disposable teaspoons for feeding

In emergency situations non-perishable food items offer a safe food source for infants who have started solids.

These should be eaten with clean hands and a clean baby spoon. Examples of non-perishable food items suitable for infants include:

- Cereals such as Weetbix or infant rice cereal
- Long life milk (for use on cereal only)
- Low salt tinned baked beans
- Meal pouches for infants (such as tuna, rice and veggies)
- Tinned fruit in natural juice
- Fruit/vegetable pouches for infants
- Nut spreads
- Tinned chicken breast (in water)
- Tinned fish (in olive oil or brine)
- Baby rusks

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