

Diabetes Corner Gazette

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Help Your Patients Prepare for Disasters or Crises



Pack your Pantry

Portable, non-perishable food is a must for situations in which the power is out, or evacuation is necessary. Share these ideas with patients, especially elderly patients or ones living in an isolated community with poor access to grocery stores:



- Bottled water should be available for each member in a household. A gallon per person per day (3 day supply is suggested).
- Brainstorm with patients types of inexpensive foods to keep in the home. Make sure they have hand operated can openers for canned goods.
- Take your group to the local grocery for a “field trip”. Check out granola/meal bars; canned goods; beef jerky and peanut butter for cost and availability.



- Glucose tablets and glucose gel are the most portable and packable products for treating low blood sugars. Help your patients acquire them.

Active Preparation

Fitness is another important way to prepare for uncertain events and helps decrease anxiety.

- Encourage your patients to begin, or extend their current walking programs by time (how long) and distance (miles).
- Practice flexibility and strength training in your community wellness programs. Share safe stretching techniques.





Medicine Safety

Meet with your diabetes patients and help them plan for any interruption of important medicines. Remind them that natural disasters such as wildfires and winter storms occur every year.

- Help patients make an accurate list of all medicines and when and how much they are to take every day. Put this information on a card they can carry in a wallet or purse.
- Teach patients how to project how much medicine or how much insulin they have each week, and how to order before they run out.
- Help patients acquire a medical identification tag to wear around their necks or on their wrists.
- In a group class, share ideas of ways to keep medicine in a single place at home, and discuss plans for taking it during an evacuation.
- Remind patients to carry a 2 day supply of medicine and strips with their meters every time they leave their homes for the day.

Frantic Feelings

TV coverage of recent hurricanes and earthquake disasters, and the unstable situation in Iraq and other countries, has increased stress and anxiety for most Americans. People with diabetes and other medical conditions have reason to be concerned about loss of electricity, transportation and poor access to medical care.



- Lead a discussion about what kinds of things your diabetes patients are most concerned about, and then make a list of ways to prepare.
- Remind your patients that many of the disasters they see on TV are uncommon occurrences.
- Share strategies for de-stressing: calling a friend or loved one, spending time with pets, practicing hobbies and crafts, and, turning off the TV news for a while.

What's New?

- Find out how many of your patients have cell phones and help them figure out how to program an emergency contact number under ICE. (In Case of Emergency)



- Look up the American Red Cross "Prepare" materials, and the safety plan provided by the State Office of Emergency Management and make copies to share with patients.
- Look up the guidelines on the Family Emergency Plan from the New Mexico Department of Health and assist your patients with making such a plan.
- On line resources for more information: New Mexico Department of Health www.health.state.nm.us; State Office of Emergency Management www.dps.nm.org/emergency; New Mexico Department of Public Safety www.dps.nm.org; American Red Cross: Prepare www.prepare.org.

This newsletter was written by Sue Perry, PhD, CDE, in collaboration with the New Mexico Department of Health, Diabetes Prevention and Control Program, 2005.

