

# Breastfed Babies Are Ready for Anything!

## Emergency Preparedness Checklist for Breastfeeding Mothers

An emergency such as a natural disaster often comes with little warning and very little time to plan. Even when a crisis hits on a more personal level (a house fire or loss of a job, for example) having a plan beforehand helps you cope. Remember that breastfeeding helps you and your baby to be ready for anything!



Discuss the following items with your family. Keep this preparation checklist in a place where you can refer to it easily at a moment's notice.

**What emergencies are most likely to occur in your community?**

Call your local emergency management office to find out how you can prepare. Identify an escape plan from your home and your community's evacuation routes ahead of time.

**Make an emergency kit for your family. Here are some items to think about:**

- Water (one gallon per person per day)
- Non-perishable food
- Can opener
- Batteries
- Flashlight
- Radio with batteries
- Candles and lighter
- First-aid kit
- Medications
- Contact information for your healthcare providers
- Money
- Change of clothes and shoes
- Blankets
- Any special items your baby might need
- Sling or wrap to help you breastfeed discreetly in public, if needed

**Put together a list of key contact people, including:**

- Family members who live with you: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Family members who do not live with you. Decide on a contact person outside your community that everyone will contact in case they are separated and there is no communication in your area.: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLCs) in your community (see the "Find a Lactation Consultant Directory" at [www.ilca.org](http://www.ilca.org))  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Physicians for your baby and your family \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Hospital and medical clinics in your community \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- Breastfeeding is life-saving! This is especially true in an emergency. Breastfeeding your baby is one of the best ways to prepare. Breastfeeding is always sanitary and safe and requires no electricity or water which may be in short supply after an emergency. Should an emergency occur, it is important for you to continue breastfeeding to keep your milk production up and protect your baby against disease and malnutrition.
- When a mother breastfeeds, she releases hormones that help her and her baby relax and stay calm, which is especially important for both you and your baby in a stressful and traumatic situation.
- Breastfeeding helps lower pain levels in babies, so if your baby has become injured, allow him to breastfeed often to help him be more comfortable.
- Breastfeeding mothers can continue to make plenty of milk, even in stressful situations.
- It is sometimes possible for a woman to start breastfeeding again, even if she has already weaned her baby. An IBCLC can help you.
- After a disaster, well-meaning people often donate infant formula. Remember that your milk is the safest food for your baby during an emergency. Lack of clean water to mix with the formula and to clean the bottles can make your baby sick.
- If you are staying in a shelter, tell the shelter workers that you are breastfeeding and ask for a quiet area to feed your baby or express milk. A curtain or partition might be all you need to help you relax so your milk will flow. A sling or wrap can also be used to provide a little privacy, if you desire, and to keep your baby close.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help! Mothers and babies need support, especially after an emergency. Ask emergency workers to help you find an IBCLC or other breastfeeding counselors who can help with your questions and concerns.



# Breastfeeding: A Vital Emergency Response Are You Ready?

## Breastfeeding Support Checklist for Relief Workers

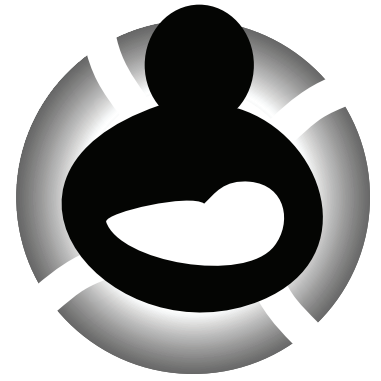


In an emergency, breastfeeding saves lives! Breastfeeding is always sanitary and safe, requires no electricity or water, and helps calm infants in stressful and traumatic situations. Mothers who breastfeed release hormones that help them relax, and they can continue to make plenty of milk, even under the most stressful situations. It is even possible for women who originally chose not to breastfeed to induce lactation when food or baby is scarce or may be contaminated. **You** can offer gold-level support for breastfeeding mothers in several key ways:

- Don't wait until an emergency to learn about the importance of breastfeeding. The best time to learn about how to support breastfeeding mothers is **before** an emergency occurs.
- Contact your local breastfeeding coalition or an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) to receive training or to learn more. You can find IBCLCs at the local hospital or by visiting the "Find a Lactation Consultant Directory" at [www.ilca.org](http://www.ilca.org).
- During an emergency, encourage mothers to breastfeed. Continuing to breastfeed will keep her milk production up, and protects her baby against disease and malnutrition.
- Do not accept infant formula donations from well-meaning contributors or infant formula companies. Only a small amount of infant formula may actually be needed, and overuse of infant formula has been found to contribute to higher infant mortality and morbidity following a disaster.
- Help mothers find privacy for breastfeeding or expressing their milk. A curtain or partition might be all that's needed to help a women feel relaxed so her milk flows well.
- ALWAYS tell the mother you are proud of her. Mothers typically lack confidence, and after an emergency, they will need your support even more. Remind her that the best thing she can do for her baby and for herself is to continue breastfeeding. Your words of praise will help her relax and feel confident.
- Allow IBCLCs to become part of your team of health care relief workers. They can set up an on-site lactation clinic and provide direct assistance to mothers who have questions and concerns about breastfeeding in difficult situations.



# Breastfeeding: A Vital Emergency Response Are You Ready?



## Breastfeeding Support Checklist for Health Workers

In an emergency, breastfeeding saves lives! Breastfeeding is always sanitary and safe, requires no electricity or water, and helps calm infants in stressful and traumatic situations. Mothers who breastfeed release hormones that help them relax, and they can continue to make plenty of milk, even under the most stressful situations. It is even possible for women who originally chose not to breastfeed to induce lactation when food for baby is scarce or may be contaminated. **You** can offer gold-level support for breastfeeding mothers in several key ways:

- Don't wait until an emergency to learn about the importance of breastfeeding. The best time to learn about how to support breastfeeding mothers is **before** an emergency occurs.
- Contact your local breastfeeding coalition or an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) to explore in-person training opportunities for yourself or your staff. You can also explore the "Speaker Directory" at the ILCA website at [www.ilca.org](http://www.ilca.org) to review potential speakers who can assist you.
- Include breastfeeding support as part of your health facility and/or community disaster preparedness plans. Invite local IBCLCs and other breastfeeding advocates to serve on your team to explore ways to incorporate breastfeeding promotion and support into emergency response policies and practice.
- Promote breastfeeding with all pregnant and new mothers, and work to establish evidence-based policies and practices within your health institution that support breastfeeding. For example: assure that mothers and infants are able to be together skin-to-skin immediately after birth, delay routine procedures until after the first breastfeed, and review policies to assure that mothers and infants are able to remain together 24 hours a day.
- Work toward becoming a Baby-Friendly Hospital by implementing the UNICEF/WHO "Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding." Research shows implementing even some of these important evidence-based steps can significantly increase breastfeeding rates. Learn more at [www.unicef.org/programme/breastfeeding/](http://www.unicef.org/programme/breastfeeding/)
- **Ban the bags!** If your hospital or practice provides "free" give-aways supplied by infant formula companies, work to eliminate them. These gimmicks undermine breastfeeding and have been shown by research to contribute to early supplementing and weaning. Learn more at [www.banthebags.org](http://www.banthebags.org).
- Tell mothers that you are proud of them. New mothers typically lack confidence, and they will long remember the words of care and support from their physician, midwife or nurse.
- Allow IBCLCs to become a vital part of the healthcare "circle of care" for new families. IBCLCs provide direct assistance to new breastfeeding families in a wide variety of situations, including emergencies. You can find an IBCLC by going to the "Find a Lactation Consultant Directory" at [www.ilca.org](http://www.ilca.org).



During and after an actual emergency, encourage mothers to exclusively breastfeed. Continuing to breastfeed will help them keep up their milk production and protect their baby against disease and malnutrition.

*\* Remind relief workers to provide an environment with privacy, if needed, to help breastfeeding mothers feel supported as they care for their children.*