

Hurricanes and Pregnancy: Staying safe after the storm



Hurricanes and other storms can change lives. Here are some tips on how to protect yourself and your baby.

I've heard that some people are getting sick after the hurricane. What happens if I get sick? Will it hurt my unborn baby?

If you do get sick, talk to a doctor or nurse right away. Tell them you are pregnant or think you might be pregnant. Some infections might harm your growing baby. The sooner you get the care you need, the better. While you are sick, drink plenty of clean water and follow the doctor's advice. Drinking lots of water or other fluids and resting are very important for all pregnant women, especially when they are sick.

I think I might be pregnant and need to take medicine for a health problem. Do I need to tell someone first?

Before you take any medicines, even ones that you can buy at the store, talk with a doctor or nurse first. Make sure to tell the doctor or nurse that you are pregnant or might be pregnant. Some medicines are not good for women to take when they are pregnant, but others are okay. If you are already taking a medicine, talk to a doctor before stopping the medicine. If you have any health problems that you were taking medicine for before the hurricane, tell a doctor or nurse.

What are immunizations? Will they hurt my unborn baby?

Immunizations are also called vaccinations or shots. They make it less likely that you get sick from some kinds of infections like the flu. Many vaccines are safe for you and your baby, but there are some that might not be safe. If you are pregnant or think you might be pregnant, tell the doctor or nurse before you get any vaccines or shots.

I have been hearing about carbon monoxide poisoning. Should I be worried about harm to my unborn baby?

Using generators, kerosene heaters, grills, or camp stoves indoors can lead to carbon monoxide poisoning. Do not use these machines in a closed space. Always be sure that a window or door is open near by. Carbon monoxide is a gas with no color or smell. It is a poison to you and your baby. If you breathe it, it can make you very sick. It can even kill you. Carbon monoxide is a poison for anyone, pregnant or not. If you've breathed carbon monoxide, you might feel like throwing up or feel very tired. If you are having problems and think you may have breathed carbon monoxide, you should tell a doctor or nurse.

What do I do if there is flood water around me? I am worried that it will make me and my unborn baby sick.

If possible, do not touch or walk in flood water. If you do touch the water, make sure to use soap and clean water to wash the parts of your body that came in contact with the water. Do not swallow any of the flood water and be careful to keep it away from your mouth. If you feel sick in any way, talk to a doctor or nurse right away. Remember to tell them that you are pregnant or think you might be pregnant.

I have heard that mosquito bites can make me sick. What can I do to protect myself and my baby?

Getting mosquito bites can make it more likely that you get sick with certain infections, such as West Nile Virus. There are some things you can do to keep from getting mosquito bites:

- Stay inside during early morning and early evening hours. This is when mosquitoes are most active.
- If you are outside, wear long sleeves and long pants when possible.
- Mosquito repellents containing DEET are good at preventing mosquito bites. It's better to put the spray mostly on your clothes. If you need to put it on your skin, use small amounts on the areas that are not covered by clothing.

I have been under a lot of stress since the hurricane. Can stress hurt me and my baby?

Stress can cause problems like having your baby come too soon or having a baby that is under weight. It is important to choose healthy ways to deal with your stress. Some ways are:

- Understand that the stress you are feeling is normal.
- Get plenty of rest – it is important for you and your baby.
- Do your best to eat healthy foods and drink lots of clean water.
- Find healthy ways to relax. Taking just a few minutes a couple times during the day to close your eyes in a quiet place can help. Reading, listening to music, or writing in a journal can also help you to relax.
- Avoid the urge to drink alcohol, smoke or take drugs as ways of coping with stress.
- Talk to friends, family members, or clergy for comfort and share your experiences and feelings with them.
- If you feel like you can't deal with your stress or that your friends or family can't help, talk to a counselor, doctor or nurse.

For more information about what you have read on this sheet, please call toll free 1-866-626-6847.