Hurricane Preparedness during Pregnancy
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Living in South Florida, we have come to understand the possibility of hurricanes and the need to be prepared. News outlets, government agencies and even retailers provide annual reminders of the season at hand and the basic supplies to stock. However, if you are pregnant, did you know there are additional preparations you need to make?

As hurricane season approaches, contact your local officials who manage the shelters to which you may evacuate. Ask for information on any special procedures in place for pregnant women, including what they will do if someone goes into labor while at the shelter. Knowing this information in advance can help you feel more at ease in the event you need to evacuate to the shelter. Additionally, during this time you may need to see a different physician for your pre-natal care. When a hurricane watch is issued for your area, contact your physician and request to pick up copies of your records, and ask if there are any special or recommended precautions you should take or be aware of. Keep this information with the other important records you will take with you if you evacuate. Make sure to request information on how to contact your physician should the office not open immediately after a hurricane event.

The March of Dimes provides additional suggestions for pregnant women to take during hurricane season:

1) Pregnant women should know the signs labor and if they experience any of these symptoms, should NOT wait for them to just go away. They should seek immediate medical care. Preterm labor is any labor before 37 weeks gestation. The signs of labor are:
   • Contractions (the abdomen tightens like a fist) every 10 minutes or more often
   • Change in vaginal discharge (leaking fluid or bleeding from the vagina)
   • Pelvic pressure—the feeling that the baby is pushing down
   • Low, dull backache
   • Cramps that feel like a period
   • Abdominal cramps with or without diarrhea

2) Pregnant women should pack prenatal vitamins, or perhaps an extra supply of over-the-counter vitamins, along with extra maternity clothes.

3) Fill prescription medications in advance.

4) Have bottled water and non-perishable food supplies on hand. Try to stock food that is high in protein and low in fat.

5) New parents who may need to stay in a shelter should consider bringing a safe place for their baby to sleep, such as a portable crib, as well as extra diapers and other basic medical supplies.

6) New parents also should take special steps to ensure they have food for their infants. The stress of a hurricane may affect lactating women’s milk supply, although breastfeeding can be calming for both mother and baby.

7) In the rare instance it becomes impossible to continue to breastfeed, mothers may consider weaning their baby. If they choose to switch to formula, parents should use pre-prepared formula because there may be concerns about the quality of the water supply. Do not use water treated with iodine or chlorine tablets to prepare powdered formula.
8) Pregnancy requires women and families to make all kinds of preparations, including special preparations during hurricane season. By taking the time to make these preparations, you will help you and your family better cope during the stress and uncertainty a hurricane can create. For more information on this, or any issue related to pregnancy and parenthood, please contact a Healthy Start Care Coordinator at (941) 613-0909. Healthy Start has other services which may help you, please ask the Care Coordinator. Prenatal care services are supported through a grant by United Way of Charlotte County.