

# Back to School Emergency Preparedness

*[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*

[Karen Hunter] Welcome to this CDC back-to-school emergency preparedness podcast. I'm Karen Hunter. As your children head back to school, it's important to have a plan for dealing with emergencies. Joining me today is Dr. Kevin Chatham-Stephens, a pediatrician who leads CDC's Children's Preparedness Unit. Welcome Dr. Chatham-Stephens.

[Kevin Chatham-Stephens] Thank you, Karen.

[Karen Hunter] How can our listeners develop a plan to prepare their whole family for an emergency?

[Kevin Chatham-Stephens] Well, as a parent myself, I understand how scary it can be to think our children might find themselves in an emergency when we're not around. The good news is, there are steps we can take to make sure our family is prepared for an emergency at school or at home.

Get a copy of your child's school or child care center emergency plan. These explain their evacuation plans and how the facility would contact you during an emergency. They also usually explain how you will be reunited with your child during or after an emergency. In a real emergency, the school's phone lines are going to be overloaded with calls from concerned parents. Getting familiar with the facility's emergency plan will help you know what to expect if an emergency does happen.

[Karen Hunter] Some children have disabilities or other special health care needs that make them especially vulnerable during an emergency. What are some things parents of these children should keep in mind when developing an emergency preparedness plan?

[Kevin Chatham-Stephens] You're right, Karen, that's an important point. If there is a child with special health care needs in your family, it's important to have a written emergency care plan and to practice that plan. If possible, let your child help make the plan.

The plan should include any medicines your child needs or any assistive devices they use, such as a motorized wheelchair. Make sure you have an adequate supply of medications. Think about what medicines or supplies your child would need if you were separated overnight. If a prescription medicine is needed while at school, such as albuterol for an asthma attack or an epinephrine pen for an allergic reaction, talk with your pediatrician. For medicine that needs to be kept at school, the pediatrician may need to give you a separate prescription and fill out a form for the school. Talk with the school about how medicine would be given to your child during an emergency. Having conversations with school staff now about emergency preparedness, can help reduce potential challenges if an emergency does happen.

[Karen Hunter] How can parents make sure their children, or their children's teachers, know how to find them during or after an emergency?

[Kevin Chatham-Stephens] Make sure the school or child care center has up-to-date emergency contact information, including your name, phone number, and email and physical addresses. This

should also include information about your child's medicines and special health care needs or allergies. You can also create an emergency card that your child can keep in the school backpack. There are examples of these cards on CDC's website. Just go to [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov) and type "backpack emergency card" in the search box.

Preparing for an emergency can be stressful for families, but having an emergency plan can provide peace of mind. Talking with your child's teacher or caregiver about your plan, explaining the school's emergency plan to your child, and making a simple backpack card can help keep your child safe and healthy if an emergency happens.

[Karen Hunter] Thank you Dr. Chatham-Stephens. For more information about how to make an emergency preparedness plan, visit [cdc.gov/parents/backtoschool](http://cdc.gov/parents/backtoschool).

*[Announcer] For the most accurate health information visit [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.*