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## How to prepare for an earthquake

### Understand your risk

Earthquakes can happen anywhere, but they are more likely to occur in certain areas. Find out if this applies to you and, if so, what your local authorities recommend. If you live in a coastal area, learn about the risk of tsunamis after an earthquake and develop a family plan accordingly.

### Talk to your children

If you live in an area at greater risk, have a conversation with your children about earthquakes (what they are, why they happen and how to stay safe) in terms appropriate for their age. Let them know that your number one priority is keeping them safe.

### Make a plan

Create an earthquake emergency plan for your whole family by:

- Identifying an evacuation plan and meeting points, especially if members of your family are in different locations during the day and are not able to communicate with each other if there are disruptions to communication services.
- Keeping all your contact information up to date, including addresses and phone numbers, and developing a communication tree with family and friends.
- Checking with your child's school and learning what the school's plan is in case of an earthquake.
- Learning about the building you live in. Buildings that are not structurally safe or not built to certain standards can be extremely dangerous in the event of an earthquake. Contact your local authorities to learn what to do if this applies to you.
- Locating safe places in each room in your home (if it is structurally safe) that you can go to if you feel an earthquake. If possible, the safest place to be is an interior room without any windows and to take cover under something sturdy such as a table.
- Putting together an "emergency kit" that has at least three days of supplies that you can carry with you if needed. Make sure to include food, water, medicine, a first aid kit, a flashlight, and batteries.
- Having cash and travel documents easily accessible.

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- Practicing the plan together so your children can understand what to do. Make sure to take the time to answer any questions they might have and to take their concerns seriously.
  - Repeating this practice together as a family a couple of times a year, so that it becomes as automatic as possible.

#### What to do during an earthquake

If you are inside a structurally safe building, stay indoors.

- **Remember: Drop, cover, and hold on:** **Drop** down to your hands and knees, take **cover** under something sturdy like a table or desk and **hold on** to a piece of furniture or sturdy object with one hand and cover your head and neck with the other. If you cannot find a sturdy object to hold on to or are not in a protected space, cover your head and neck with both arms.
- Do not use elevators (lifts).
- If you live or work in a building that you believe is not stable or up to earthquake-safe building standards, contact your local authorities for guidance on the safest practices.

#### If you are outdoors, stay outdoors

Try to get to an open area away from buildings, trees and objects like streetlights, electricity cables, telephone poles etc. Once you are in an open space, drop to the ground and stay there until the earthquake stops.

If you are in a vehicle, stay in your vehicle

Stop as quickly as possible while staying safe. Put on your parking brake and keep your seatbelts fastened until the shaking stops.

If you experience an aftershock, follow the same guidance as above

In the first hours and days after an earthquake, aftershocks can be frequent but will become less frequent and intense.

#### What to do after an earthquake

##### Check for risks

Be aware that there may be hazards such as fallen objects or broken glass around you. Look for any immediate dangers, such as fires.

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Go to a safe, clear area outside if possible

Avoid using elevators (lifts), as these could have been damaged.

Take care of yourself and others

If you or a family member have any injuries, attend to them as soon as possible.

### **Reach out**

- Let your family and friends know where you are and that you are safe.
- Stay connected as much as possible (a portable radio is a useful resource if available) to local news and government updates about the situation, including where to find shelters, health clinics and food distribution points, and follow guidance from local officials.
- In the event of power outages, use your phone sparingly to preserve battery.
- In the case of a significant earthquake, mobile networks can become congested, and SMS may be a more effective way to communicate.

Comforting your children after an earthquake

### **Start the conversation and keep it open**

- Make sure you provide your child with opportunities to talk about how the earthquake made them feel and encourage them to share any worries or feelings of fear or anxiety.
- Show them that you are listening carefully and care deeply about how they are feeling.

### **Provide reassurance**

- Let them know that the earthquake and its aftermath are not permanent and explain to them that they are natural events and not anyone's fault.
- Give your children reassuring affection by spending time together and providing lots of extra hugs.

### **Watch for signs of emotional distress**

While many children will seem okay for a month or so following a disaster, the numbness can wear off and they can begin showing symptoms of trauma. Some ongoing anxiety is to be expected, but if it does not stop after a few months or if your child is experiencing more extreme symptoms, such as panic attacks or wanting to harm themselves or others, reach out to your family doctor or mental health professional immediately.

### **Practice calming exercises together**

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Deep belly breathing is very helpful and is something you can do together with your older children. If you have a younger child, you could make it into a game: Every hour on the hour, see how you can calm your mind and body down by slowing down your breath.

**Try to maintain some kind of routine**

Though it may be incredibly difficult, going to bed or eating at the same time will help your child feel a bit more connected to their life before the earthquake.

Source: <https://www.unicef.org/parenting/earthquake-safety-information>