

## WELCOME BABY

### Emergency & Disaster Preparedness Information

#### **Dear Parents,**

The following information is a little different from that in our usual newsletters. As you may know, our WELCOME BABY! program is sponsored by Skagit County Public Health, Skagit Valley Hospital and Island Hospital. This newsletter is about emergency and disaster preparedness.

The mission of Skagit County Public Health is to work toward a “Safer and Healthier Skagit County” for all individuals. The three main parts of our Public Health department are Environmental Health( protecting water quality and food safety); Clinical Health Services (immunization and communicable disease prevention); and Child and Family Health.

WELCOME BABY! is part of the Child and Family Health division and works to support, educate and help families understand normal child development and be the best parents they can be. Parenting is the most important job you will ever do and we want to make sure you have good information so you can enjoy raising your children.

When you have children, the last thing you want to think about is a disaster or an emergency. But being prepared in case of one is an important part of becoming a responsible parent. Most of us can remember a time when we were children and got sick, broke a bone or needed stitches. Some of us may have had our homes flooded or been without heat or electricity during a storm. From a child’s perspective, the excitement of going to bed by candlelight can be romantic, but from your perspective as parents it is quite a different matter. Nothing is as important as keeping our children safe. This is why we are sending you a letter about emergency and disaster preparedness.

An emergency can be anything from running out of gas, to a car accident, a severe windstorm, flood or a major flu outbreak. **Having bottled water and a first aid kit available is a good start.**

The following information from Skagit County Public Health is designed to help you make a safety plan for your family. Getting supplies together need not be overwhelming. If your family goes camping, it is similar to getting your gear together in your camping box. Have your supplies handy where you can get to them easily.

#### **HOW TO PREPARE YOURSELF AND FAMILY FOR AN EMERGENCY OR DISASTER**

Emergency preparedness is a process for most of us and not a one-day event. Preparedness for one disaster is preparedness for most disasters. The items listed below are in no particular order.

**First:** Educate yourself on the most likely risks. Here in the Pacific Northwest, our highest risks are considered to be tsunamis, floods, earthquakes and pandemic flu. If a tsunami, flood or earthquake hit your home you may be forced to evacuate. However, if the risk is pandemic flu you may need to stay in your home for prolonged periods of time.

**Second:** Decide where you will store your supplies. Storage needs to be accessible and dry. Gather together those items you may need. Skagit County Public Health has made a cumulative list of suggested items for you to gather together. NOTE this list is for one person for three days. With concerns about pandemic flu in the headlines you should strive to be prepared for up to six weeks. Again most people cannot just go buy the extra items they need all at once, but slowly, over weeks and months, most people should be able to put some items away for emergencies.

**Third:** Create an emergency plan including where you would meet and whom you would call (preferably out of the area). Include contact information (like your doctor) in your emergency kit. Think about having to leave your home and also about needing to stay home for a prolonged period of time. Plan what to do if you are taking care of someone at home with the flu. (A plan might include using only one room for the sick, to have only one person to provide care, and to make sure there is ventilation to the outdoors.)

**Fourth:** Help protect yourself and others: use good health habits. Take these simple precautions to help prevent the spread of flu and other respiratory disease:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water, or use a hand sanitizer.
- Cover your mouth with a tissue when you sneeze or cough.
- Use a tissue to wipe your nose. Wash your hands after blowing nose and throwing away tissue.
- Stay home to avoid spreading germs if you or your family members are coughing, sneezing or have aches or fever associated with the flu.
- Wear a mask to cover your face in a medical office, if asked.

For more tips on preventing the spread of germs, see the “Preventing the Spread of Germs” fact sheet from the Washington State Dept. of Health

**Fifth:** Be a good neighbor and share your ideas for preparation with others. Know your neighbors who can't get out and who will need help. Keep an eye on them.

**Sixth:** Consider First Aid, or disaster training from the American Red Cross, or (CERT) Community Emergency Response Training from the Department of Emergency Management.

**Government agencies will respond to community disasters, but citizens may be on their own for hours, or even days, after disaster strikes.**

**You should be prepared to take care of yourself and your family for at least 3 days.**

**If you have questions about emergency preparedness and disaster planning, please call 360-336-9380.**

**Links:**

Prevent the Spread of Germs info: [www.doh.wa.gov/phepr/handbook/prevent.htm](http://www.doh.wa.gov/phepr/handbook/prevent.htm)

WA State Dept. of Health: [www.doh.wa.gov/](http://www.doh.wa.gov/)

Skagit County: [www.skagitcounty.net](http://www.skagitcounty.net)