



**Australian
Breastfeeding
Association**

Breastfeeding in emergencies

Breastfeeding provides your baby with safe water and food, protection from infections and comfort. Breastfeeding your baby or toddler is a powerful way of preparing for an emergency and making your family more resilient to disasters.

How to prepare for an emergency

There are simple steps you can take to prepare for an emergency with your child. Make an emergency plan that includes leaving early and evacuating to a family or friend's home rather than an evacuation centre. Pack an evacuation kit that includes water and food for you as well as items for your baby. The Australian Breastfeeding Association's evacuation kit list for breastfed babies lists everything you need to care for your baby for 3 days.

What to expect

During the disruption of an emergency, your baby may:

- want to breastfeed more often
- want to be held more by you
- wake more often overnight.

You can be confident that you will make enough milk for your baby if you breastfeed often and do not become dehydrated.

Stress cannot reduce your milk supply but it can slow the flow of milk. Your baby may take longer to feed or be fussy when feeding. If there is heavy bushfire smoke, they may also come on and off the breast to breathe.

What to do

During and after the emergency, drink water regularly and breastfeed your baby whenever they want a feed. Look for the following signs to know that your baby is drinking enough milk:

- Your baby has at least 5 heavily wet disposable nappies (or at least 6 wet cloth nappies) in 24 hours
- Their wee is pale (not dark) in colour and has little to no smell
- Their poo is runny (if they are only breastfed) or soft (if they are also eating some solid foods).

If your baby needs more milk, offering more frequent breastfeeds will help. This will tell your breasts to make more milk for your baby.

You can help the milk to flow when you breastfeed by looking at your baby and thinking about how much you love them. If you are in an evacuation centre and feel uncomfortable breastfeeding in front of people, ask if somewhere more private can be found for you to sit. Evacuation centre workers will be happy to help.





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If your baby is over 6 months and has started solids, it's OK for them to have only breastmilk until you can access safe foods and water for them. Your supply will increase to meet their needs if you breastfeed more often. A baby who has been mixed feeding (having both breastfeeds and formula) can also return to just breastfeeding if you offer the breast more often.

Look after yourself as well as you can. Do not be afraid to ask for help from others if you need something. You are doing an important job by looking after your baby. If you need food or other resources, check if there is a fast-track queue for people with young children. If not, see if someone else can queue for you.

Keep your baby close to you. This will make it easier to notice their early feeding cues and breastfeed as often as needed. Using a baby carrier or sling can help. If people ask what they can do to help you, suggest things that will lighten your load but not separate you from your baby.

Once the emergency has passed, any changes in your baby's behaviour like more frequent feeding, night waking or clinginess will reduce on their own as life becomes more normal.

Concerned about feeding your baby in an emergency?

Call the **National Breastfeeding Helpline** (free and available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week) or speak to a healthcare worker.



1800mum2mum
Breastfeeding Helpline 1800 686 268

