

10 Tips for Keeping Children Safe in an EARTHQUAKE



Get Ready. Get Safe.

Earthquakes are caused by a sudden, rapid shaking of the earth caused by the breaking and shifting of rock beneath the earth's surface. They can strike suddenly, without warning and occur at any time of the year and at any time of the day or night. In the U.S., 45 states and territories are at moderate to very high risk of earthquakes. Fortunately, there are simple steps families can take to be better prepared and keep children safe when earthquakes strike.

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PREPARE:

1. **Talk about earthquakes.** Spend time with your family discussing how and why earthquakes occur. Explain that an earthquake is a natural event and not anyone's fault. Use simple words that even young children can understand.
2. **Find safe spots in your home.** Identify and discuss safe spots in each room of your home so that you can go there immediately if you feel an earthquake. Safe spots are places where you can take cover, such as under a sturdy desk or table, or next to an interior wall.
3. **Practice earthquake drills.** Regularly practice with your family what you would do if an earthquake occurred. Practicing earthquake drills will help children understand what to do in case you are not with them during an earthquake.
4. **Learn your caregivers' disaster plans.** If your children's school or child care center is in an area at risk from earthquakes, find out how its emergency plan addresses earthquakes. Ask about evacuation plans and if you would be required to pick up your children from the site or from another location.
5. **Keep contact information current.** Phone numbers, addresses and relationships change. Keep your children's school or child care emergency release information up to date, so that if an earthquake strikes, you will know where your child is and who can pick them up.

DURING AN EARTHQUAKE:

6. **If inside, Drop, Cover, and Hold On.**—**Drop** to the ground and take **Cover** under something sturdy like a desk or table. With one hand **Hold On** to the object and with your other arm protect your head and neck. If you don't have anything sturdy to take cover under, crouch down next to an interior wall. Stay indoors until the shaking stops and you're sure it's safe to exit.
7. **If outside, find an open spot.** Find a clear spot away from buildings, trees, streetlights and power lines. Drop to the ground and stay there until the shaking stops.
8. **If in a vehicle, stop.** Pull over to a clear location, stop and stay there with your seatbelt fastened until the shaking stops.

FOLLOWING AN EARTHQUAKE:

9. **Involve children in recovery.** After an earthquake, include your children in clean-up activities if it is safe to do so. It is comforting to children to watch the household begin to return to normal and to have a job to do.
10. **Listen to children.** Encourage your child to express feelings of fear, anxiety or anger. Listen carefully, show understanding, and offer reassurance. Tell your child that the situation is not permanent, and provide physical reassurance through time spent together and displays of affection. Contact local faith-based organizations, voluntary organizations, or professionals for counseling if extra help is needed.

Additional Resources: The tips above are just the start of knowing how to prepare for and respond to earthquakes. Use the following resources to help ensure your family is ready for the next earthquake.

For adults:

- American Red Cross: Earthquake Preparedness. <http://www.redcross.org/prepare/disaster/earthquake>
- Earthquake Country Alliance: Welcome to Earthquake Country. <http://www.earthquakecountry.info/>
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA): Earthquake. <http://www.fema.gov/earthquake>

For children:

- Earthquake Country Alliance: Beat the Quake! Game. <http://www.dropcoverholdon.org/beatthequake/game/>
- Department of Homeland Security. Ready Kids: Earthquakes. <http://www.ready.gov/kids/know-the-facts/earthquakes>

