

# For Your Health

## Handling Emergencies and Natural Disasters

Natural disasters, which affect all regions of the United States, have direct and indirect consequences on health. Each year a thousand or more people are injured or killed during disasters such as tornadoes, earthquakes, hurricanes, floods and winter storms. Conditions after disasters can also affect health. Contaminated water and food, and a lack of sanitation can lead to disease. Fire hazards, debris and flooding can lead to injuries and death. Finally, natural disasters can also affect the mental and emotional health of those living through them.

### Why Is Preparedness Important?

While the natural phenomena that lead to disasters cannot be controlled, people can take precautions to lessen their effects. There are many important decisions to be made before and during a disaster event. In order to make good decisions, people must be informed. Becoming knowledgeable about the phenomena and knowing what to do before, during, and after disasters can help to lessen the injuries, loss and damage associated with them. When it comes to disasters, it is critical to be proactive rather than reactive.

### Why Should Children Be Educated About Natural Disasters?

Children are affected by natural disasters as much as, if not more than, adults. It is important for children to know that they can contribute to their family's preparedness activities. Giving children information about disasters and teaching them how to prepare for and remain safe during the events allows them this opportunity. The more mentally prepared they are before a disaster, the better they will be in handling the situation should an emergency arise.

Educating children about natural disasters can be easily integrated into comprehensive school health education programs because not only the physical, but also the social and emotional dimensions of health are addressed. A comprehensive program, such as the National Council for Health Education's **Growing Healthy®**, is designed to motivate and assist students to maintain and improve their health, enabling them to develop the skills and attitudes necessary for health-related problem solving and informed decision-making. It seeks to promote skills building, which helps young people to avoid high-risk behaviors. Teaching about the health consequences of natural disasters

**At Aetna, we believe there is nothing more important than your health. That's why we're pleased to give you information to help you manage your health.**

**Read on to learn more.**

involves teaching about personal health, family living, disease prevention and control, mental and emotional health, injury prevention and safety, community health, and environmental health. It also helps children develop important skills to make decisions to keep themselves and their families healthy and safe.

### Visit Your Personal Self-Service Member Website Online!

Your secure Aetna Navigator™ member website is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Use it to perform common transactions involving your Aetna medical, dental, prescription drug or flexible spending account (FSA) plans. You can send an online message to Aetna Member Services, access claims, coverage, and general health information as well as decision-support tools. Log on to the Aetna Navigator site at [www.aetna.com](http://www.aetna.com).

Reprinted with permission from Aetna IntelliHealth® and Harvard Medical School ([www.intelihealth.com](http://www.intelihealth.com)). Medical content reviewed by the Faculty of Harvard Medical School. Copyright 1996 – 2005.

Additional information is available on Aetna's consumer health information website, Aetna IntelliHealth, at [www.intelihealth.com/IH/ih/IH/WSIHW000/9273/21335.html](http://www.intelihealth.com/IH/ih/IH/WSIHW000/9273/21335.html).

This message is for informational purposes only, is not medical advice and is not intended to be a substitute for proper medical care provided by a physician.

**Aetna is the brand name used for products and services provided by one or more of the Aetna group of subsidiary companies. The Aetna companies that offer, underwrite or administer benefits coverage include: Aetna Health Inc., Aetna Health of California Inc., Aetna Health of the Carolinas Inc., Aetna Health of Illinois Inc., Aetna Health Insurance Company of New York, Corporate Health Insurance Company and/or Aetna Life Insurance Company.**