



Disaster Preparedness for Persons with Cancer

If you have cancer, planning for a disaster is crucial, especially if you become displaced. You may be on active treatment and/or have a weakened immune system, putting you at higher risk for infections, bleeding, fatigue, and injury. Keep yourself safe by developing an inclusive plan specific to your needs. You can do the following to get ready:

- Talk with your health care provider about what to do and how you will stay in contact in the event of a disaster. This should include a discussion about your possible options if it becomes impossible for you to get to a scheduled radiation treatment or chemotherapy.
- Talk and develop a plan with your family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, and school personnel now - whoever may need to help you during a disaster event. Keep copies of the plan at home, in your car, with other members of your Personal Support Network, on a USB drive, and/or your smartphone.
- Know your exact diagnosis, cancer stage, and any medications you take. If you are receiving chemotherapy or radiation, know at which point you are in your treatment cycle.
- If you are undergoing chemotherapy and must be in a shelter, protect yourself from infection by washing your hands using alcohol-based hand sanitizer if water is not available, and wearing a mask (including a NIOSH-Approved N95 Particulate Filtering Facepiece Respirator).
- If you are on a clinical trial, know the trial number (NCT number, preferably), principal Investigator, hospital, and drugs or treatments being given.
- Make sure you have your health care provider's contact information and other important phone numbers with you at all times including your insurance company

and pharmacy, as well as a list of medications you are taking or copies of prescriptions. Cell phones may not work and batteries can drain, so be sure to have important phone numbers and information written down.

- If you have insurance, make sure to carry your insurance card. Contact your insurance provider in the event you are displaced and need to seek care.
- Make a kit with items you may need like dressings, antiseptic, medications, a thermometer, etc. Put them in a zip lock bag to keep them dry.
- Wear a medical alert bracelet or carry other identification with you. If you become ill in an emergency shelter, first responders will know how to better assist you.
- Sign up to receive emergency alerts through your county or town.
- Visit FLGetAPlan.com to learn more about how to prepare yourself, your family, and your pets in the event of an emergency and develop an individual disaster plan.

Sources: National Cancer Institute at the National Institutes of Health, U.S Department of Health and Human Services, www.cancer.gov

Information Base for Disaster Nursing Knowledge and Skills to Protect Lives – Cancer Patients Undergoing Chemotherapy, http://www.coe-cnas.jp/english/group_cncr/manual/manual06/01/08.html

Developed by the Florida Department of Health Bureaus of Preparedness and Response and Tobacco Free Florida – Cancer Prevention and Control Program.