

Be Ready to Navigate Med Issues During a Disaster or Emergency

Recent hurricanes, wildfires, and other catastrophes will put focus on **how to help patients weather natural disasters or emergencies**.

Use these tips to prepare for and navigate the next calamity.

Stay calm. Disasters can create chaos and panic...and being patient and understanding can go a long way.

Encourage patients to have an adequate supply of meds, especially if a disaster is forecast...to avoid scrambling or skipping doses.

Ask about other items that may be needed, such as pet meds...first aid supplies (bandages, etc)...basic OTCs (pain relievers, etc)...and ice packs to keep refrigerated meds cool.

Remind patients to update their med list. Suggest downloading pharmacy apps or taking pictures of Rx labels...in case patients become displaced and need to use another pharmacy.

Keep on top of your state laws and pharmacy and payer policies...these are often relaxed during a state of emergency.

For instance, you may be able to fill emergency Rxs to tide patients over...refill Rxs early...or dispense a 90-day refill on maintenance meds (insulin, etc), even if the Rx is for 30 days.

If you get a reject, try submission code "13"...it indicates an override is needed due to a disaster or emergency. Document this info on the Rx...to avoid issues during an audit.

If patients from another pharmacy don't have Rx labels or med lists and their usual pharmacy is unavailable, try contacting their prescriber or insurance company.

Be alert for med shortages. In some cases, your pharmacist may be able to substitute another med in the same drug class...or a different formulation, such as an IR instead of ER tab.

Ensure patients are current with vaccines (COVID-19, flu, etc). For example, the risk of illness increases if patients need to shelter in close quarters during an evacuation.

Get our CE, *Preparing for Disasters and Emergencies*, for more ways to plan for these challenging situations.

Key References:

-<https://www.fda.gov/drugs/emergency-preparedness-drugs> (10-20-22)

-<https://emergency.cdc.gov/> (10-20-22)

-<https://www.ready.gov/> (10-20-22)

Pharmacy Technician's Letter. November 2022, No. 381110