

Caring for seniors in long-term care in an emergency

Hazards, such as wildfires, floods and earthquakes, can happen at any time. It is important to consider the needs of seniors in long-term care when planning for, or responding to emergencies.

How are family members cared for in a long-term care facility?

B.C. health authorities are required to have emergency preparedness plans for all health care and long-term care facilities. In an emergency, health authorities will continue to care for people evacuated from hospitals and other health care facilities.

The Community Care and Assisted Living Act requires all licensed long-term care facilities to have their own emergency preparedness plan. The plan must include procedures to prepare for, respond to and recover from any emergency. This includes procedures for evacuating people in their care, if needed. The facility will work with health authorities and local emergency responders to make sure residents are safe. This applies whether the residents stay in the care facility or move to another location.

For information about emergency preparedness and planning at the facility where your family member lives, you may ask:

- What is the facility's evacuation plan
- Where would facility residents move to
- What is the role of family members in an emergency

What should I consider when caring for family members in an emergency?

In an emergency, some families may want to care for their family members themselves.

There are a few things to consider if you want to care for your family member during an emergency:

- Is your home suitable and accessible for a person with their mobility disabilities
- Do you have the skills to care for a person with their medical and mobility conditions
- Can you provide for their needs while also caring for yourself and your family
- Can you prepare food that meets their dietary needs? For example, therapeutic diets and texture modifications, like thickened fluids and minced or pureed food
- Can you maintain a safe home temperature? This is particularly important during extreme hot or cold weather
- Do they have behaviours that put them at risk of harm, such as wandering? If they are a wanderer, how can you make your home safe and secure

Things to think about include:

- Mobility aids, such as a walker or a wheelchair
- Medication storage and administration
- Helping the person in and out of bed or going up and down stairs
- Helping the person with toileting or bathing
- Special equipment, such as lifts, grab bars and a raised toilet seat

- Special dietary needs
- Safety and security of your home
- Preparing your home with a household emergency plan
- Preparing an emergency kit with food, water and some basic supplies

For more information

Some local health authorities provide emergency preparedness information:

Fraser Health

www.fraserhealth.ca/health-topics-a-to-z/emergency-preparedness

Interior Health

www.interiorhealth.ca/health-and-wellness/natural-disasters-and-emergencies

Island Health

www.islandhealth.ca/learn-about-health/emergency-preparedness/emergency-preparedness

Northern Health

www.northernhealth.ca

Vancouver Coastal Health

www.vch.ca/en/service/community-care-facilities-licensing

For more information on emergency preparedness, visit PreparedBC at www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-management/preparedbc.

For more HealthLinkBC File topics, visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca/more/resources/healthlink-bc-files or your local public health unit. For non-emergency health information and advice in B.C. visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca or call **8-1-1** (toll-free). For the deaf and hard of hearing, call **7-1-1**. Translation services are available in more than 130 languages on request.