



Coping After an Earthquake

Living through an earthquake and the aftershocks is a frightening experience. Earthquakes can cause mental stress and worry in addition to property or physical damage. Be alert to your feelings and help others, particularly children, regain a sense of security.

Visit www.Liveandworkwell.com for a Special Alert on Earthquakes and sign in or use your access code to enter and get more assistance. Call your support number (under the site's left side navigation) if you would like to share your concerns or get personalized support for you or your family. Our specialists are available 24/7 to help. Liveandworkwell also has information on earthquake preparedness. (See *Natural Disasters* in the "Life Changes" area of the "My Health & Well-Being" library.) or just type "earthquake" in the "Search Site" box and enter for a list of helpful information.

Fact Sheet: Earthquakes

- Excerpts from FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency)

Earthquakes strike suddenly, violently and without warning. Identifying potential hazards ahead of time and advance planning can reduce the dangers of serious injury or loss of life from an earthquake.

During –

If indoors:

- § Take cover under a piece of heavy furniture or against an inside wall and hold on.
- § Stay inside.
- § The most dangerous thing to do during the shaking of an earthquake is to try to leave the building because objects can fall on you.

If outdoors:

- § Move into the open, away from buildings, streetlights, and utility wires.
- § Once in the open, stay there until the shaking stops.

If in a moving vehicle:

- § Stop quickly and stay in the vehicle.
- § Move to a clear area away from buildings, trees, overpasses, or utility wires.
- § Once the shaking has stopped, proceed with caution. Avoid bridges or ramps that might have been damaged by the quake.

After -

Be prepared for aftershocks. Although smaller than the main shock, aftershocks cause additional damage and may bring weakened structures down. Aftershocks can occur in the first hours, days, weeks, or even months after the quake. Help injured or trapped persons. Give first aid where appropriate. Do not move seriously injured persons unless they are in immediate danger of further injury. Call for help.

Listen to a battery-operated radio or television for the latest emergency information.

Remember to help your neighbors who may require special assistance
Stay out of damaged buildings. Return home only when authorities say it is safe.

- § Use the telephone only for emergency calls.
- § Clean up spilled medicines, bleaches or gasoline or other flammable liquids immediately. Leave the area if you smell gas or fumes from other chemicals.
- § Open closet and cupboard doors cautiously.
- § Inspect the entire length of chimneys carefully for damage. Unnoticed damage could lead to a fire.

Inspecting Utilities In A Damaged Home -

- Check for gas leaks
- Look for electrical system damage. If you see sparks or broken or frayed wires, or if you smell hot insulation, turn off the electricity at the main fuse box or circuit breaker. If you have to step in water to get to the fuse box or circuit breaker, call an electrician first for advice.
- Check for sewage and water lines damage. If you suspect sewage lines are damaged, avoid using the toilets and call a plumber. If water pipes are damaged, contact the water company and avoid using water from the tap. You can obtain safe water by melting ice cubes.

Mitigation -

Mitigation includes any activities that prevent an emergency, reduce the chance of an emergency happening, or lessen the damaging effects of unavoidable emergencies. Investing in preventive mitigation steps now such as repairing deep plaster cracks in ceilings and foundation, anchoring overhead lighting fixtures to the ceiling and following local seismic building standards, will help reduce the impact of earthquakes in the future. For more information on mitigation, contact your local emergency management office.

Pets After An Earthquake -

The behavior of pets may change dramatically after an earthquake. Normally quiet and friendly cats and dogs may become aggressive or defensive. Watch animals closely. Leash dogs and place them in a fenced yard.

Pets may not be allowed into shelters for health and space reasons. Prepare an emergency pen for pets in the home that includes a 3-day supply of dry food and a large container of water.

www.Liveandworkwell.com is a free, convenient online resource available to you and your family because of your benefit package. Please visit and view the **Special Alert** for local resources (Rotating Alerts in bar near the top of the page.) You can also find online disaster and stress management resources as well as a support telephone number. Register/Login or enter with your Access Code for additional resources. We are here to help.

Individuals who are coping with severe stress respond better to direct offers of help. When a coworker returns to work, talk with your manager about how you may be able to help adjust the workload and ease back into the schedule. It may take some time for her to return to his normal routine, especially if she is still sorting through relocation challenges or insurance claims.

Talk to your manager about other ways that your workplace can provide support and assistance. You may offer to help make phone calls or complete forms during your breaks.

When to Seek Help –

Sometimes the trauma of the disaster may be more than a person can handle alone. According to the Center for Mental Health Services, the behaviors listed below are signs that the individual needs additional assistance coping with the disaster.

- § Difficulty communicating thoughts
- § Difficulty sleeping
- § Difficulty maintaining balance
- § Easily frustrated
- § Increased use of drugs/alcohol
- § Limited attention span
- § Poor work performance
- § Headaches/stomach problems
- § Tunnel vision/muffled hearing
- § Colds or flu-like symptoms
- § Disorientation or confusion
- § Difficulty concentrating
- § Reluctance to leave home
- § Depression, sadness
- § Feelings of hopelessness
- § Mood-swings
- § Crying easily
- § Overwhelming guilt and self-doubt
- § Fear of crowds, strangers, or being alone

When talking with your friend who exhibits severe signs of stress, consider broaching the subject with the following suggestions from the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine:

- § Ask to speak to the person privately.
- § Ask, “Are you having some difficulties? Do you want to talk?”
- § Suggest the individual contact a counselor or his company’s EAP professional.

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