

## FAMILIES

# Children and Hurricanes

**T**he stress associated with an incoming hurricane affect both parents and their children, who can tell when mom and dad are full of worry. Be considerate of the fine line between educating and terrifying impressionable kids about the dangers of these natural disasters.

## Keep the Family Together

The American Academy of Pediatrics stresses to parents that children should not be separated from their families or caregivers during any major pre-planning events. This includes evacuation, transport, sheltering or the delivery of other services. The Academy suggests that if separation is unavoidable, a reunion should occur as soon as it is safe to do so.

A great way to avoid this instance is to have a plan in place for the possible scenarios that may play out. Luckily, hurricanes give plenty of warning before their arrival is expected. Create a family plan that draws out where you will go, how to communicate if a separation persists and where to meet up once it is safe.

## During the Storm

If your city is under a mandatory evacuation, don't risk waiting out the storm. When you have evacuated your home, explain to your children about the importance of following orders of their public officials and why they will be safer by leaving until the storm subsides.

While in your safe spot, try to keep your routine as normal as possible. Encourage children to bring along comfort items like board games for the family. Talk to them about feelings they have about the storm. It's likely that they have heard horror stories from their peers or through media exposure. Reassure them that the most important thing is keeping everyone safe throughout the event.



It is common for people to experience very strong emotional reactions with the arrival of a hurricane and its accompanying damage to homes and community infrastructures.

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## After the Storm

Involve your children in small cleanup projects around their neighborhood. Always ensure they are safe and not around environments with

deep water or downed electrical wires — even if the power is out.

Nemours Children's Health System recommends keeping an eye on your child's behavior after a storm. Watch

for signs of stress, nightmares or excessive clinginess. These emotions are common in children who have went through a traumatic experience. Talk to a pediatrician about your concerns.

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