

Non-visible disabilities

Non-visible disabilities can include communication, cognitive, sensory, mental health, learning or intellectual disabilities in which an individual's ability to respond to an emergency is restricted. They can also range from allergies, epilepsy, hemophilia, diabetes, thyroid condition, multiple sclerosis, pulmonary or heart disease and/or dependency on dialysis, sanitary or urinary supplies. Individuals with non-visible disabilities may have difficulty performing some tasks without appearing to have a disability.



Questions?

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This information is available in alternate formats by contacting 519-822-1260 x 2670.

Non-visible Disabilities



Emergency Preparedness



Your emergency plan

- Prepare an easy-to-understand list of instructions or information for yourself that you think you may need in an emergency.
- Keep an emergency contact list on your person of key people that are aware of your special needs.
- Inform your designated support network of where you store your medication.
- Keep a pencil and paper or portable electronic recording device handy to write down or record any new instructions provided to you in an emergency.
- Consider owning and wearing a MedicAlert® bracelet or identification because it will help notify emergency responders about your non-visible disabilities. For more information visit: www.medicalert.ca.
- Request a panic push-button to be installed in the building you work and/or live in, so that in the event of an emergency you can notify others of your whereabouts and that you need special assistance.
- **People with multiple sclerosis:** Symptoms are often made worse by heat and humidity. Be prepared to keep cool and dry.
- **People with diabetes:** Keep frozen water bottles or ice packs in your freezer. Have an insulated bag or cooled thermos ready to store your insulin, should there be a power outage or you need to evacuate.



Dos and don'ts

Assisting people with disabilities

- Allow the person to describe what help they need from you.
- Find effective means of communication (e.g. providing drawn or written instructions. When giving direction use landmarks instead of terms "go left" or "turn right").
- Be patient, flexible and maintain eye contact when speaking to the person.
- Ask the person about their medication and if they need any help taking it. (Never offer medicines not prescribed by their physician.)
- Keep people with multiple sclerosis cool and dry to avoid making their symptoms worse.
- **Avoid** shouting or speaking quickly. Instead, speak clearly but not so slowly as to offend the person.
- **Do not** restrain a person having a convulsion. Instead, roll them on their side to keep their airway clear and place something soft (e.g. your jacket) under their head to protect it from injury. Once the convulsion passes and they become conscious, help them into a resting position.

Additional items

Emergency survival kit

- Supply of food items appropriate to your disability or dietary restrictions.
- List of instructions that you can easily follow in an emergency.
- Personal list and minimum three days supply of needed medications, medical supplies and special equipment (e.g. ventilator for asthma, nitrolingual spray for heart condition, Epinephrine pen for allergic reaction/ anaphylactic shock, etc.).
- Detailed list of all prescription medications.
- MedicAlert® identification.
- Any other emergency supplies unique to your special needs.

The information in this brochure has been drawn from the Emergency Preparedness Guide for People with Disabilities/ Special Needs, prepared by Emergency Management Ontario and has been reproduced with their permission.

