

## **Patient Education Tool: Tornadoes What to Do and How To Prepare**

### **What You Need to Know About...**

#### **Tornadoes**

**Definition** - A tornado is also known as a twister or cyclone. It is a great gust of circular wind that looks like a funnel and can be seen in the sky swirling like a cone towards an area.

**Cause** – Tornadoes are the result of unstable changes in the atmosphere that include strong upward surges of air and changing air currents around the air surges. The exact cause is not known. Tornadoes often travel from the southwest to northeast and are prevalent throughout the United States. The Mississippi Valley is the area hit the hardest by tornadoes.

**Actions to take** - Meteorologists are making progress with identifying the 'right' conditions for a tornado, however, it is not possible to predict its strength, exact location or whether it will touchdown. Tornadoes strike rapidly, which prohibits preparation.

#### **How To Prepare**

1. Develop both an at work and/or school and an at home tornado plan.
2. Specify where to gather, the basement is often a location of choice.
3. If you have no basement in your house, choose a room, closet or hallway that is in the center of the building and on the lowest level.

4. Assemble a tornado kit:

- ◆ First aid supplies
- ◆ Essential medications
- ◆ Canned food and can opener
- ◆ Dried food packets, such as fruit, nuts, cereal, that are high energy
- ◆ Three gallons of water per person( minimum- in plastic containers)
- ◆ Change of clothing, long pants, long sleeve shirts, windbreakers, rain gear, study shoes
- ◆ Bedding and towels
- ◆ Battery-powered radio, flashlight, and extra batteries
- ◆ Special items for infant, elderly, or disabled family members
- ◆ Sterno, portable stove( but use sparingly)
- ◆ Pet and infant food and formula( if needed)
- ◆ Antibacterial/germicidal hand wipes
- ◆ Paper and plastic dinnerware
- ◆ Cash, personal papers
- ◆ Toilet items, including toilet paper

5. Obtain copies of important family documents. Secure in waterproof container and have close by, include:

- ◆ Will, insurance policies, contracts deeds, stocks and bonds
- ◆ Passports, social security cards, immunization records
- ◆ Bank account and credit card numbers
- ◆ Prescriptions, important health information
- ◆ Asset inventory
- ◆ Important phone numbers

### **What to Do During**

1. If at home, follow your tornado plan and go to the designated area.
2. If not at home, no matter the building you are in, go to the lowest level.
3. If there is not enough time go into a center hallway.
4. Avoid south and west areas.
5. Try to avoid windows and door areas.
6. You can go into a closet or get into the tub.

7. If in a mobile home and there is time, go to a building with a strong foundation.
8. If driving:
  - ◆ Never try to out drive a tornado
  - ◆ Stop by the side of the road and try to find:
    - ◆ a low lying ditch to lay in
    - ◆ a building to get in
9. If available use pillows and blankets to protect your head and face. If these are not available, use your arms and hands to protect your head and face.

### **After the Tornado Goes By**

1. Listen to the emergency bulletins.
2. Be alert for downed electric lines.
3. Do not go into damaged areas.
4. Use flashlights, not candles.
5. Await the okay to return to your home.
6. Do not overload cellular or regular telephone lines with non-emergency calls.