

Terrorism:

A Family disaster Plan

Being prepared is an important step Americans can take to help their families and their country in the fight against terrorism, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).

The nation's pediatricians recommend that families have a disaster plan in place to make households less vulnerable in the event of an attack, and to help children feel safer. Tips for enacting such a plan, and other information on coping with the threat of terrorism, are available on the AAP Web site at www.aap.org/family/frk/frkit.htm.

"Families need to be adequately prepared to meet their children's physical, medical and psychological needs," says Deborah Mulligan-Smith, MD, a member of the AAP's Committee on Pediatric Emergency Medicine. "Planning ahead increases the likelihood of securing the safety of your family."

Mulligan-Smith says parents should involve their children in disaster planning. She developed a Family Readiness Kit for her home state of Florida to help families prepare for hurricanes and other events. AAP offers this kit, updated with specific tips to prepare for terrorism, on its Web site along with other information about bioterrorism.

The kit includes a detailed list of items to keep on hand in the home and in the car, such as food and water, pet supplies, warm clothing, rain gear, blankets and toiletries. A battery-powered radio, flashlights, extra batteries, credit card, cash, and first aid kit are on the list, along with many other essential items. Families should consult the complete list to help them prepare.

In addition, households with infants or children with chronic health conditions should take extra steps to provide



for their children's basic needs. Mulligan-Smith says these might include infant formula, medicines, and a copy of the child's medical history. For all family members, copies of medical information and identification should be kept with the disaster supplies.

The AAP advises families to establish "rally points," places for family members to regroup if they are separated during a disaster or evacuation. They should designate one meeting place at each location where they spend a significant amount of time, such as their schools, neighborhood, and work places.

These actions are a good start toward being prepared and helping children to feel more secure. But parents need to talk to their children to put it all into perspective. They also need to be ready to help children cope with the fear, loss, and insecurities that go along with a disaster. The information on the AAP Web site can help families prepare for, communicate about and cope with the possibility of disaster.