

What's a "GO BAG" - Do I Need One?

By Susan M. Graham, Certified Elder Law Attorney*

In the event of an emergency that requires you to leave your home everyone should have a "go bag" that is packed and ready to go. The purpose of a "go bag" is to provide a portable, pre-packed collection of essential supplies that allows you and your family to evacuate your home quickly and safely in an emergency, such as a health crisis, fire, flood, or other natural disaster. It acts as a lifeline, ensuring you have critical items like food, water, medications, and important documents ready to go so you can survive for at least the first 72 hours [3 days] after an event when resources may be scarce and immediate help may not be available.

Nearly a quarter of emergency room visits among older patients turn into hospital stays. For this reason, it may be wise to invest some time preparing a "Go Bag".

Below, you can find an examples of recommended items to have ready for you or a loved one, should the need arise:

SELECT YOUR BAG

Select a bag for your items. Most people use a backpack or a heavy, cloth bag with a zipper.

BAG CONTENTS

Documents

Medical Information Card: Diagnoses, contact information, medications, allergies, and any special dietary considerations (e.g. low sodium, diabetic, vegetarian, etc.)

Care Providers: Including your primary care physician and any specialists

Copies of:

- Your state ID or Driver's License

- Your cards for health insurance, Medicare, prescription plans

- Your Living Will, Health Power of Attorney & Physician's Order for Scope of Treatment

- Your Financial Power of Attorney

Emergency Contacts: beginning with who can make medical decisions on your behalf.

If you are a Caregiver for others: Contact information for someone who is a back-up to you.

If you have pets or livestock: Contact information for someone who can care for them, any medications, food locations/feeding times, etc. If you have houseplants or gardens, information for watering schedules

Personal Items [for at least 3 days]

- Undergarments
- Toothbrush/paste
- Denture adhesive
- Socks
- Pants and Top
- sleep wear
- jacket
- Razor/shaving cream
- Brush or comb
- Reading glasses/spectacles
- Hearing aid batteries
- Toiletries such as deodorant, moisturizer, lip balm, or eye drops
- Contacts and solution
- Spare glasses
- Spare phone charger
- Spare housekey for helpers
- A small amount of cash
- Reading materials
- Comfort items (slippers, photos, prayer book, etc)
- Passwords for phone, computer, ipad,
- Bottled water
- Snack food

Once you have created your "Go Bag" put it in an easy spot to grab, let those you rely on know where it is and remind yourself to upgrade the contents at least every 6 months. You get a GOLD STAR for doing this and protecting you and your loved ones from the risk of needing this bag in the future.

* Certified by the National Elder Law Foundation