

How are Children Different from Adults?

Disasters affect children differently than they do adults. Learn more about the unique needs of children during and after disasters.

- Children's bodies are different from adults' bodies.
 - They are more likely to get sick or severely injured.
 - They breathe in more air per pound of body weight than adults do.
 - They have thinner skin, and more of it per pound of body weight (higher surface-to-mass ratio).
 - They have less fluid in their bodies, so fluid loss (e.g. dehydration, blood loss) can have a bigger effect on children.
 - They are more likely to lose too much body heat.
 - They spend more time outside and on the ground. They also put their hands in their mouths more often than adults do.
- Children need help from adults in an emergency.
 - They don't fully understand how to keep themselves safe.
 - Older children and adolescents may take their cues from others.
 - Young children may freeze, cry, or scream.
 - They may not be able to explain what hurts or bothers them.
 - They are more likely to get the care they need when they have parents or other caregivers around.
 - Laws require an adult to make medical decisions for a child.
 - There is limited information on the ways some illnesses and medicines affect children. Sometimes adults will have to make decisions with the information they have.
- Mental stress from a disaster can be harder on children.
 - They feel less of a sense of control.
 - They understand less about the situation.
 - They have fewer experiences bouncing back from hard situations.

Page last reviewed: October 11, 2019

Content source: [National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities](#), [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)