What is a Special Medical Needs Shelter (SMNS)?

It's an emergency shelter that offers limited support for people with special medical needs and their adult caregivers. An SMNS is for people with medical conditions that are not severe enough to require hospitalization but do require care not available at American Red Cross shelters. One family member or adult caregiver should accompany each person who seeks safety in an SMNS.

Who can use an SMNS?

If you have special medical needs and are able to live at home with assistance from a family member or adult caregiver, you may seek shelter at an SMNS. Admission to the shelter will be based on your medical needs and on the shelter's capacity to meet those needs. The SMNS will also accommodate your caregiver. Only one adult caregiver will be permitted, and that caregiver should remain with you in the shelter at all times.

For more information:

Contact your local
DHEC public health department,
visit: www.scdhec.gov/shelters

Or, consult your local telephone
directory under the
county government listings.

D H E C

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South Carolina Department of Health
and Environmental Control

www.scdhec.gov

We promote and protect the health of the public and the environment.

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Special Medical Needs Shelters

A Preparedness Guide

South Carolina Department of
Health and Environmental Control

Plan Ahead!

An SMNS is a shelter of "last resort." It is not like a home or hospital. An SMNS should be used only when other options are NOT available. If you have special medical needs, it's best to plan ahead for possible emergencies. Talk to your doctor about the best place for you during a hurricane, storm or other event. Make plans to have one family member or adult caregiver stay with you from the time an evacuation is recommended until it is officially ended. If possible, make plans to stay with family, close friends or in a hotel away from the affected area.

Examples:

1. If you receive dialysis several times a week, you should identify dialysis centers in other parts of the state. Ask your doctor what you should do if you can't get to your preferred site. Make arrangements to stay near a dialysis center, either in a hotel, with family members or with friends.
2. If you have heart disease, consider staying with relatives in another part of the state to avoid the stress associated with sharing a small shelter space with others.

Remember

Shelters should be used only when no other options are available.

What should I do to prepare if I have to evacuate my home?

Make a list of the items you need to take with you to the shelter and post it where you will be sure to see it before leaving your home. Use this list to help you get started.

You will need to take:

- ❑ Enough **medications** for seven days. Bring all prescription medications in the original containers even if your supply is low.
- ❑ Enough **medical supplies** for seven days. These are items that you use on a daily basis such glucometers, syringes, dressings and bandages.
- ❑ **Medical equipment** used at home such as wheelchairs, canes or walkers, hearing aids, and eyeglasses.
- ❑ **Breathing devices** including oxygen concentrators, tanks or canisters.
- ❑ Any **special food** items you need.
- ❑ **Personal items** like a toothbrush, toothpaste, deodorant, diapers and clothing.
- ❑ _____
  _____
  _____
  _____

If you have to use an SMNS, remember to:

- Make arrangements with your durable medical equipment company to assure extra canisters or refills can be supplied if you are oxygen dependent. Be sure to bring the name and phone number of your supplier with you.
- Make arrangements with your home health agency to continue services while in the shelter. Have the name and phone number of your home health agency with you.
- Bring blankets, sheets, pillows and folding chairs. Some SMNS do not have cots or beds.
- Make arrangements with your dialysis center for your next treatment. Bring the name and phone number of the center.
- Bring only one adult caregiver with you to the shelter. The adult caregiver is expected to remain at the shelter for your entire stay.
- Inform family members where you will be during the storm.
- Bring a cell phone and charger if you have one. Your caregiver can make contact with your family members, if needed.
- Ask a relative or friend who lives more than 100 miles away to be your emergency contact person. Bring the name, address and phone number of your contact person.
- Keep in mind that a caller is more likely to connect with a long-distance number outside the disaster area than with a local number within it. Shelter workers will need this information in case of an emergency.