

Earthquake Safety Actions for Parents and Childcare Providers



Emergency preparedness organizations all agree that “Drop, Cover, and Hold On” is the appropriate action to reduce injury and death during earthquakes. If you feel shaking or get an earthquake alert, immediately:

DROP where you are, onto your hands and knees. This position protects you from being knocked down and also allows you to stay low and crawl to shelter if nearby.

COVER your head and neck with one arm and hand

- If a sturdy table or desk is nearby, crawl underneath it for shelter.
- If no shelter is nearby, crawl next to an interior wall (away from windows).
- Stay on your knees; bend over to protect vital organs.

HOLD ON until the shaking stops.

- Under shelter: hold on to it with one hand; be ready to move with your shelter if it shifts.
- No shelter: hold on to your head and neck with both arms and hands.



If you use a wheelchair or a rollator walker:

LOCK your wheels (or set the brake).

COVER your head and neck with your arms or a book.

HOLD ON to your device with one hand if possible, until shaking stops.

Learn more at EarthquakeCountry.org/accessibility.

Learn what to do in many situations at EarthquakeCountry.org/step5.

Earthquake Safety with an Infant

A parent or caregiver should carefully pick up the infant, hold the child against their chest, and carry them as they protect themselves according to the guidance above. The adult’s body will provide protection above and on either side of the child.



Protecting One or More Children

The best protection for one or more children is to prepare before shaking begins: look around your home or childcare facility for furniture or other objects that may fall or be thrown during an earthquake. Then, either remove the hazard or secure it in place (see [EarthquakeCountry.org/step1](https://www.earthquakecountry.org/step1)). By securing your space, you will have less to worry about when shaking starts. For facilities with multiple infants, the removal of hazards is even more important as the babies should remain in cribs as staff should protect themselves during the shaking.

Young children at home or in childcare facilities can be taught how to protect themselves. This is often done by reading the “Rabbits in the Hole” story frequently (there are various versions online) frequently: in the story, a mother rabbit and her bunnies feel the earth shake and scurry for cover in their burrow. For the drill, adults call out “Earthquake: Rabbits in the Hole!” and tell the “bunnies” to take cover under desks and tables and hold on to the furniture legs. To reduce fear, some caregivers sing songs with their children while they hold on (during drills and actual earthquakes too).

During earthquake shaking, parents and caregivers who are not already next to children should protect themselves until shaking stops. Avoid the instinct to run to protect children who are not with you: this may be less worrisome if you have secured furniture and other objects, and have taught children how to be safe on their own. In past earthquakes, some parents who have run to children have been injured by stepping on broken glass or by falling objects, and the children had to then find help.

Evacuate or Not?

After shaking stops, look around to assess damage to the building. If there are large cracks in the walls or floors, if you smell gas, or if there is smoke, then you may need to evacuate. But be cautious, as there may be additional hazards outside, such as building debris or fallen electrical lines. Facilities with infants might consider evacuation cribs. If you don’t see any hazardous issues with the building, it may be safer to stay inside, especially during poor weather conditions.

Why Practicing with Children is Important

Like adults, children need to develop muscle-memory so they will react quickly and correctly when the ground starts shaking. Parents and caregivers should model earthquake safety and practice often with their children. At least one of your drills can be part of your region’s Great ShakeOut Earthquake Drill ([ShakeOut.org](https://www.shakeout.org)), when you can join the millions of people worldwide who practice earthquake safety each year!