

A Health Campaign of Uniformed Services University, www.usuhs.edu, and the Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress, Bethesda, Maryland, www.CSTSonline.org

MILITARY FAMILIES ON THE MOVE: *Tips for Keeping Your Family Healthy*

Moving, one of the most stressful life events, can be especially difficult for families when service members are deploying or returning from deployment. Part of your checklist before and after a move should be attending to you and your family's healthcare routines and needs.

With so many details demanding your attention — packing, scheduling movers, cleaning your old home, saying

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“goodbye” and getting resettled — it is easy to forget your own or your family's health check-ups and medical needs. Equally as important is being prepared for any health emergency while in transit should there be unexpected delays or occurrences.

Here is some practical advice to make your healthcare transition go more smoothly.

Healthcare Tips as You Prepare to Move

- Take advantage of all briefings related to your medical and dental insurance including portability of TRICARE, medical care en route to your new station, and transportation of your medical records.
- Request a summary of your medical records or any important medications that your family members take. This is especially important if you use civilian primary care managers.
- Birth certificates, immunization records, social security cards, passports, naturalization and adoption papers (if necessary), school records, and copies of orders are all important documents to be sure to take with you rather than ship.
- Ask for extra refills of any important medications that must be taken regularly.
- Set up any support services. For children with special needs, call, obtain information, and, if possible, set up support services at your new post before leaving.
- Resume routine healthcare as soon as you arrive at your destination, especially if you are pregnant or have infants or young children.
- Become familiar with disaster or emergency issues of importance in your new location (i.e., living in an area prone to hurricanes or earthquakes). Disaster preparedness enhances family safety and health.

- Attend to the healthcare of household pets and make sure they have the required vaccinations for your move (some states require special things).

Arriving in Your New Community

- Write down and bring to your first doctor visit any health-related questions or concerns about yourself or a family member to help your new doctors and nurses understand your needs.
- Recognize the normal stress of moving, but communicate any unusual or prolonged symptoms such as difficulty sleeping, loss of appetite, problems concentrating, or not enjoying things that normally give you pleasure.
- Seek out help if you or a family member is at risk for substance abuse or family conflict that often start or worsen as the result of stressful events. Resources are available for you and your family.
- Call or go online to Military OneSource to access confidential telephone and web-based services. Call 1-800-342-9647 to speak with a live counselor in any language, or visit screening.mentalhealthscreening.org/Military_NDSD to take a free, confidential mental health self-assessment and to receive referrals to local providers.