

Federal, State, and local emergency management experts and other official preparedness organizations all agree that “**Drop, Cover, and Hold On**” is the appropriate action to reduce injury and death during earthquakes. *Great ShakeOut Earthquake Drills* ([www.ShakeOut.org](http://www.ShakeOut.org)) are opportunities to practice how to protect ourselves during earthquakes.

You cannot tell from the initial shaking if an earthquake will suddenly become intense...so always Drop, Cover, and Hold On 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)



**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.
- HOLD ON to your shelter and be prepared to move with it until the shaking stops.



Earthquakes occur without any warning and may be so violent that you cannot run or crawl. You are more likely to be injured if you try to move around during strong shaking. You will never know if the first jolt is start of the big one...so always Drop, Cover, and Hold On immediately!

## **How to Drop, Cover, and Hold On with an Infant**

A parent or caregiver should carefully pick up the baby in their arms, holding the child against their chest, and carry them as they Drop, Cover and Hold On. The adult will provide additional protection above and on either side of the child. This is a bit easier with infants who are not crawling yet, but the adult can still provide protection to an older child either by crouching over and therefore surrounding the child with their body or using an arm to pull the child up next to the adult, holding them in place.

## **Protecting One or More Children**

The best protection for one or more children is to begin by looking around the room(s) to identify what overhead hazards may fall during an earthquake, then either remove the hazard or secure it using recommended practices. Hazards can be everything from potted plants on a windowsill, to tall bookshelves filled with books, a double-hazard due to the fact that not only the furniture may topple but the books may become projectiles during shaking and hurt anyone nearby. By taking a few measures to reduce the hazards, it will be easier to Drop, Cover, and Hold On safely when the shaking starts.

For daycare facilities or centers with multiple infants, the removal of hazards will be very important as babies may need to remain in their cribs as staff may not be able to move them all safely.

If there is no table or desk near you, either carry your children or direct them to drop to the ground and then, if possible and safe to do so, move to an inside corner of the room. You and your children should be in a crawling position to protect your vital organs and be ready to move if needed, and cover your head and neck with your hands and arms.

## **Evacuate or Not?**

Many people are injured while trying to move DURING the shaking. It is safer to Drop, Cover, and Hold On until the shaking is over, then assess damage to the building, if any, to determine whether to evacuate. Remember, there may be additional hazards on the building exterior or outside. If you decide it is safer to evacuate, carefully choose rehearsed methods to do so. For daycares, consider evacuation cribs for this purpose.

## **Why Practicing with Your 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 Drop, Cover, and Hold On behaviors and practice with their children so they too will react appropriately. Practice these drill regularly and discuss them together afterwards.

### **How to Ensure Success in Participation**

One idea that can increase the participation of young children is to make Drop, Cover, and Hold On a fun activity. This could be done using the "Rabbit in the Hole" story read throughout the year where a mother rabbit and her bunnies feel the earth shake and scurry for cover in their burrow. For the drill, the adult calls out "Earthquake - Rabbit in the Hole" after which all the "bunnies" take cover under desks and tables where the children Drop, Cover, and Hold On during the 1-minute drill. Additionally, adults can lead children who are holding on to sing songs while they remain in the quake-safe stance under tables or desks. After the drill, children should share their experiences and discuss the different sounds, thoughts, etc. and be acknowledged for their safe actions.

### **As the Adult: Remain Calm**

Comfort the children with reassuring words that you understand why they are scared and they are safe with you. Assure them that their parents know where they are and will be there soon.

*These are guidelines for most situations. Learn how to protect yourself in other situations and locations at [www.earthquakecountry.org/step5](http://www.earthquakecountry.org/step5).*

### **More information:**

[www.earthquakecountry.org/dropcoverholdon](http://www.earthquakecountry.org/dropcoverholdon) Why Drop, Cover, and Hold On is recommended

<http://mitigation.eeri.org/files/fema-240.pdf> A FEMA Guide for Child Care Providers

[www.cphd.ucla.edu/headstartwb.html](http://www.cphd.ucla.edu/headstartwb.html) The Head Start Disaster Preparedness Guidebook