

**Are You
Ready Series:
Pandemic
Preparedness**

Let's cut to the chase, it is very difficult to prepare for epidemics and pandemics especially for those living in close proximity to others.

These natural reoccurring disasters tend to occur suddenly and without warning. According to the [Center for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#), serious, deadly contagious disease outbreaks can and do happen. CDC investigates new contagious diseases—averaging one new contagion per year. These new contagious diseases can emerge right here or only a plane-ride away from here. It's not just new diseases that threaten the United States. Some diseases long thought controlled in the United States, like tuberculosis, can reemerge and be more deadly than ever.

Looking back at the Black Plague, those living in high populated areas were hit hardest by this pandemic. The Black Death is estimated to have killed 30–60 percent of Europe's population. Given our vast array of transportation systems, modern society causes infectious disease to spread far more rapidly compared to any other time in recorded history; and because pandemics are fast moving, vaccinations would be useless. Further, in regards to the world's transportation system, the morbidity rate in a future pandemic could result in millions seeking medical care at the same time thus overwhelming hospitals and emergency departments.

Many believe the misuse of [antibiotics](#) in the past has led to the dangers of [super bugs](#) such as the spread of MRSA and MERS virus. In fact, nearly all significant bacterial infections in the world are becoming resistant to commonly used antibiotics. This is a doomsday scenario that means that our current medical safety nets will be much smaller. In the near future, even the smallest cuts could pose a danger to our health.

If antibiotics are used too often for things they cannot treat such as viral infections, they become less effective against the bacteria they're intended to treat. Further, not taking antibiotics exactly as prescribed also leads to problems. For example, if you do not take the full course of prescribed antibiotics, it does your body more harm than good because the antibiotic may wipe out some but not all of the bacteria. The surviving bacteria become more resistant and can be spread to other people. When bacteria become resistant to first line treatments, the risk of complications and death is increased.

Before we get into the meat and potatoes of pandemic preparedness, let's look at the changes that will likely occur in your community if this disaster were to occur:

- Challenges or shutdowns of business commerce
- Breakdown of our basic infrastructure: communications, mass transportation, supply chains
- Payroll service interruptions
- Staffing shortages in hospitals and medical clinics
- Interruptions in public facilities – Schools, workplaces may close, and public gatherings such as sporting events or worship services may close temporarily.

When an outbreak occurs, many will remain in a state of denial about any approaching epidemics. Simply put, most people believe themselves to be invincible to negative situations and do not like the idea change of any kind. They will remain in this state until they realize they are unable to deny it to themselves any longer. Being prepared before the mass come out of their daze will ensure that you are better prepared before the hoards run to the store to stock up.

Community Preparedness Will Play a Large Role

Preventing the transmission of an illness rests in the hands of not only the individual, but the community as well. Proper planning and prevention plays a very large role in preparing for a pandemic. There is a lot to be said for preventative measures.

As a whole, communities should take the necessary steps to be prepared for potential challenges before a threat exists. Understand that areas where there are large congregation areas i.e., malls, schools, airports, grocery stores also pose a hazard to spreading the epidemic more quickly. Breakdowns in communications, supply chains, payroll service issues, and healthcare staff shortages should be anticipated when preparing for a pandemic. To assist communities planning for a pandemic, the Federal Government has developed a Pandemic Severity Index. This index assists the government in gauging the severity of the epidemic based upon the amount of fatalities. If the government sees fit, they can activate pandemic mitigation measures. Some of these measures include the following:

1. Isolation and treatment (as appropriate) with influenza antiviral medications of all persons with confirmed or probable pandemic

influenza. Isolation may occur in the home or healthcare setting, depending on the severity of the individual's illness and/or the current capacity of the healthcare infrastructure.

2. Voluntary home quarantine of members of households with confirmed or probable influenza case(s) and consideration of combining this intervention with the prophylactic use of antiviral medications, providing sufficient quantities of effective medications exist and that a feasible means of distributing them is in place.
3. Dismissal of students from schools (including public and private schools as well as colleges and universities) and school-based activities and closure of childcare programs, coupled with protecting children and teenagers through social distancing in the community to achieve reductions of out-of-school social contacts and community mixing.
4. Use of social distancing measures to reduce contact between adults in the community and workplace, including, for example, cancellation of large public gatherings and alteration of workplace environments and schedules to decrease social density and preserve a healthy workplace to the greatest extent possible without disrupting essential services. Enable institution of workplace leave policies that align incentives and facilitate adherence with the nonpharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) outlined above.

Source

My largest concern with pandemics is that supplies would be quickly exhausted leaving many unprepared to handle the ordeal. This will only fuel a more chaotic situation. These concerns are not new to most governments and steps have been taken to ensure communities are prepared and are able to contain most epidemics. To view the U.S. government's protocols for pandemic preparedness, [click here](#).

One precaution the government may consider is a social distancing strategy or voluntary/involuntary home quarantine. If this occurs, the responsibility falls on our shoulders to ensure that we are able meet our needs. However, this is not anything new to a prepper. We believe in being self reliant, and if you have followed the [52-Weeks to Preparedness series](#), you should well be on your way to handle such a disaster.

Individual Prevention Starts At Home

So how does the average person properly prepare for this type of emergency? Similar to other emergencies, we simply prepare as much as we can because any steps taken toward preparedness are better than none at all.

Following is a list of pandemic supplies for your home:

- One month supply of emergency foods that require no refrigeration.
- Store 1 gallon of water per person per day, in clean plastic containers. Avoid using containers that will decompose or break, such as milk cartons or glass bottles.
- **Plastic sheeting**
- 2-3 small wastebasket or a bucket lined with a plastic garbage bag (to dispose of clothing, soiled supplies, etc.)
- Gallon-sized zip-loc bags
- Portable toilet with disposable liners
- Supply of nonprescription drugs and pain relievers
- **Cold medicines** and **decongestants**
- Stomach remedies
- Duct tape
- **Anti-diarrheal medication**
- **Essential oils**
- Vitamins that have immune boosting enhancers
- Fluids with **electrolytes**
- Bleach or disinfectant
- Soap
- Tissues
- Garbage bags to collect soiled clothing and bedding before they are washed.
- A thermometer
- Protective eye gear and/or faceshield
- nitrile gloves
- **Tyvek protective suit and shoe covers**
- **Disposable cleaning gloves (in quantity)**
- Hand wipes
- **Alcohol-based hand sanitizers** or homemade **hand sanitizer supplies**
- **Protective clothing**
- **Disposable aprons or smocks** (at least 2 cases)
- **Duct tape** for sealing off doorways and vents
- Disposable nitrile gloves (2-3 boxes)
- **Garbage bags**

- **N95 masks** or **N100 respirator masks** for use when the sick person is coughing or sneezing (can be purchased at hardware stores and some drugstores)

In the event of a pandemic, because of anticipated shortages of supplies, health care professionals and widespread implementation of social distancing techniques, it is expected that the large majority of individuals infected with the pandemic illness will be cared for in the home by family members, friends, and other members of the community – not by trained health care professionals. Bear in mind that persons who are more prone to contracting illnesses includes people 65 years and older, children younger than five years old, pregnant women, and people of any age with certain chronic medical conditions.

So what can you do to be ready for a pandemic outbreak?

- Store a one month supply of water and food. During a pandemic, if you cannot get to a store, or if stores are out of supplies, it will be important for you to have extra supplies on hand.
- Have a supply of face masks to wear around those who may be ill or exposed to the illness. Further, consider adding the **following items** to your pandemic supplies.
- Periodically check your regular prescription drugs to ensure a continuous supply in your home.
Have any nonprescription drugs and other health supplies on hand, including pain relievers, stomach remedies, cough and cold medicines, fluids with electrolytes, and vitamins.
- Talk with family members and loved ones about how they would be cared for if they got sick, or what will be needed to care for them in your home.
- Prepare a **sick room** for the home to limit family member's exposure to the virus.

To decrease the chances of the virus spreading and infecting other household members as well as members of your community, it is important that every effort be made to limit exposure to the illness. Some considerations on how to prevent exposure to a pandemic outbreak are:

1. Avoid close contact with those who are ill.
2. Stay inside and avoid contact with others.
3. Avoid touching your mouth, nose and eyes during any pandemic.

4. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick.
5. Keep your hands clean. Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub or make your own **natural hand sanitizer**.
Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
6. If you are ill, stay indoors or keep your distance from others.
7. Keeping your immune systems up by getting lots of sleep, having a good diet and taking antioxidants in protecting your health.

Pandemic outbreaks are fast moving and vaccines may not be able to stop it. This natural occurring disaster is not one you should take lightly. Several overarching themes emerge from the discussion of pandemic preparedness. Not only are our bodies under attack, but our way of life is as well. Community and individual preparation are critical in regards to prevention.