

No one likes to think about an emergency threatening the health and safety of loved ones. Unfortunately, emergencies do sometimes arise. While we cannot always prevent an emergency, there are ways to be better prepared to handle one. We consulted several resources to compile this list of tips for emergency preparedness.

- **Create a family health information sheet.** Having important information at your fingertips is critical in an emergency. Create a sheet including each family member's blood type, allergies, medical conditions (current and past), and medications including dosages. Tape the sheet inside a cabinet door or another location that is easy to find.
- **Maintain current emergency contacts.** Compile important numbers into one document. Include both in-town and out-of-town emergency personal contacts; hospitals near home, work and school; family physicians; the pharmacy; employer and school contact information; and your state public health department.
- **Store a two week supply of water and food.** This will be important if you cannot get to a store or if stores are out of supplies due to a natural disaster or community-wide outbreak of illness. Items that store well include: canned meats and fish, protein and fruit bars, dry cereal, peanut butter, dried fruit, crackers, jarred baby food and formula and canned vegetables. Also remember paper products such as diapers, toilet paper and tissues.
- **Keep a supply of healthcare items on hand.** These include nonprescription drugs and over-the-counter remedies such as pain relievers, cough and cold medicines and vitamins. Stores can easily sell out of these items during an emergency involving influenza outbreak or even the threat of one. Be sure to monitor expiration dates and rotate stored items. Also stock up on disinfectants and hand sanitizers.
- **Practice and teach healthy habits.** To limit the spread of germs and prevent infection, children and adults should practice frequent hand washing with soap and water. Coughs and sneezes should be covered with tissues. Individuals who are sick should stay home from work or school to prevent infecting others. Report any health concerns to your school health department and family physician.
- **Consider the care of individuals with special needs.** In an emergency, some services people with special needs rely on may be disrupted or altered. Talk with current service providers to see what contingency plans could be developed.
- **Plan for social disruption.** In a severe natural disaster or pandemic outbreak, public services may be shut down. These include schools, banks, government offices, restaurants and stores. Be sure to consider this in your preparedness planning.
- **Get involved.** Many communities are developing preparation plans for emergencies such as natural disasters, acts of terrorism or an influenza pandemic. Contact your city, county or state government to learn about plans, recommendations for your area and how you can help.

These tips were compiled from a variety of sources, including [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov). For more tip sheets, visit [www.fraser.org](http://www.fraser.org).