

Emergency Preparedness -- Medical-1

Summary: This section addresses –

- Retaining normal health under abnormal conditions,
- Preparing for injury or illness, and
- Additional sources of critical information.

The material that follows primarily addresses narrowly defined medical issues. For other important aspects of health and wellness preparation, be sure to review:

- Sanitation-1 Essential sanitary practices for personal and community health
- Water-1 Avoiding dehydration and disease by ensuring a supply of clean water
- Power-1 Heating, cooling, lighting, and medical accessory use without power
- Identity-1 for record keeping advice.

Remaining “Normal” – shelter in place

How do you maintain your health every day when you lack access to basic utilities and supplies? Review your routine and requirements carefully.

An emergency can make it difficult – or impossible – to refill your prescriptions.

Organize and protect your prescription and over-the-counter drugs and supplements to prepare for an emergency. Keep at least a 2-week supply of all medications, stored so that you can quickly and easily add them to your go-bag if you have to evacuate.

- Prescription and insurance regulations complicate this. See Medical-2.
- Rotate your stock (see below and Medical-2 for expiration information)
- See Power-2 for suggestions about refrigeration issues
- Don't forget non-drug essentials: hypodermics, swabs, hearing aid batteries, etc.

Illness or Injury in a disaster --

In an emergency, you may be assisted, evacuated or treated by people who do not know you, do not have access to your records, and may have limited medical training or experience. They will need information to help effectively.

- Your condition – Primary information : diseases, conditions, abnormalities, implants, etc.). Secondary: contact information for your medical providers.
- Your needs – Primary information: List of medications and doses, by common or brand name. Regular treatments or therapies. Secondary information: prescription numbers, pharmacy and contact info, technical name; providers.

32 Making Information Useful

- 33 • Have both primary and secondary information printed out. Put waterproofed
- 34 copies (Ziploc bags or laminated) in your go-bags, perhaps in your car.
- 35 • Prominently post all the information at home – with or near your POLST form is
- 36 probably a good place, as well as in your personal record file.
- 37 • If possible, print the most critical primary information on a card or piece of paper
- 38 that you can laminate or cling-wrap and carry in your wallet, along with your ID.
- 39 • In an evacuation, couples should also carry a copy of the partner’s information.
- 40 • Friends or relatives who are emergency contacts should also have copies.

41 Other approaches: information sources such as computer-readable chips or drives,
42 cloud storage, etc. can also be considered, but it is unlikely that responders in a major
43 emergency would be able to use this technology effectively. Traditional bracelets or
44 necklaces would be more useful basic information about a few conditions.

45 First Aid

46 If you are trained in first aid, you probably have some idea about appropriate supplies.
47 If you want suggestions, a refresher, or references to sources of information, see
48 Medical-2. Remember that your (or your partner’s) specific condition(s) may dictate
49 special considerations. Blood thinners, diabetes, allergies, and many other conditions
50 dictate careful selection of emergency supplies.

51 An indelicate discussion of a delicate topic

52 In a serious emergency, you may be faced with taking actions that are normally
53 undesirable or illegal. Think ahead to prepare for those potential conditions. The
following comments are NOT recommendations, but acknowledgements of issues
you may wish to consider. Any decisions are yours.

We are told to dispose of unused or out of date medications, especially narcotics, and
to never use medicine prescribed for anyone else. However, in a disaster, narcotics
are priceless to the person who needs them. The medicine doesn’t know for whom it
was prescribed. It is the user who is responsible for applying judgment and
accepting consequences.

From the Harvard Health website, [2018](#) and [2020](#): “It’s true that the effectiveness of a
drug may decrease over time, but much of the original potency still remains even a
decade after the expiration date.” Exceptions are liquid antibiotics, aspirin,
nitroglycerin, insulin, and Epi-pens. Expired tetracycline may become toxic.