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# Pandemic Flu Planning Guidelines and Checklist for Individuals

Over the past few months the media has begun informing the world of the real possibility of a pandemic influenza outbreak. The Department of Safety and Security is devoting considerable energy and resources to planning and preparing for this very real threat. You, too, can prepare for an influenza pandemic, and now is the time to do so.

The information in this document has been gathered from a variety of sources including the Center for Disease Control, the World Health Organization, many other websites, and people living here in the Upper Valley who are inspired by good old fashioned Yankee ingenuity. Even so, the contents of this document by no means constitute a complete plan for dealing with a pandemic flu outbreak. It is, however, a good starting place. You will most certainly have other ideas and methods that will work better in your particular situation. That is great! The more personal and specific your plan is for you and your situation, the better it is. You know your home, family and needs better than anyone, so use this guideline as a resource to develop a plan for yourself and your specific needs.

There are many things we can do to prepare ourselves and our families for the possibility of a pandemic flu outbreak. You should learn about both the magnitude of what can happen during a pandemic outbreak and what actions you can take to help lessen the impact of an influenza pandemic on you and your family. Review the websites listed in this document to learn as much about the pandemic flu as you can. Take some time to sit down with your family and discuss what you would do in the event of a pandemic flu outbreak in the United States, and how you can best prepare as a family. Attached to the end of this document is a checklist with items you might want to consider having on hand.

No one knows exactly what will happen during a pandemic flu event, including which services will be available and which will not. Will there be travel restrictions? Will grocery stores be open, and will they be able to get deliveries? Will there be electricity? Will there be gasoline available for cars? Will there be fuel oil and propane deliveries? We simply cannot answer these questions because we do not know at this time how many people will be sick and the effect this will have on services. In doing your planning it is probably safe to say you should plan for periodic or extended disruption of some services and significant delays for other services we take for granted during normal times. Schools may be closed. Businesses may be closed or only operate on limited hours. Regular responses by utility companies may be delayed. For instance, it is possible that instead of getting a downed wire to your house fixed in a few hours when a tree limb has fallen on it, it may take a few days. Make your plans accordingly. Have contingency plans to address your needs and those of your family. Reasonable preparations for the pandemic at your home will make the emergency less problematic for you and your family and will help in speeding up the process of "getting back to normal" once the pandemic emergency is over.

So let's begin!

## ~Planning for a Pandemic~

### 1. Store a supply of water and food.

During a pandemic, you may not be able to get to a store, or stores may be out of supplies. It will be important for you to have extra supplies on hand. This can be useful in other types of emergencies, such as power outages and disasters.

#### Water

**You might buy bottled water and store it. Experts suggest a gallon per day for each person is a good planning guide.**

Many of us in this area have wells and pumps and we all know what happens when we lose electricity. Even some municipal systems require electric pumps to maintain pressure and supply. You might want to consider buying an inexpensive water treatment filter such as campers or hikers use. This will enable you to use water from other sources (ponds, streams) if you are unable to get water from your well or tap. Make sure it is a bacteria grade filter.

**(Web site)**

#### Food

**Most experts recommend storing some food for any emergency situations. A pandemic flu emergency is no different! A 30 day supply is usually recommended for many emergency situations.**

What types and amounts of food should you store for 30 days of food for a family or for just an individual? Storing up to 30 days of food for an emergency does not have to be expensive especially if you plan and buy during sales and can rotate the stock into your regular food supplies. Try this method to determine what to buy:

Develop four weekly menus (that's 21 meals per week) of foods your family likes and eats. Determine how much of each food type you'd need for a week, and assume for planning purposes that the entire family will be at home. Think about how you would prepare the food, keeping in mind your cooking source may not be the kitchen range or microwave you're accustomed to. (More about this a bit later.) Emphasize those foods and ingredients that do not require refrigeration.

Do this for each weekly menu and then begin to purchase accordingly. Once you have all of the items for your four weekly menus in stock, each time you use foods from one of the four menus replace them the very next time you go shopping. This keeps the food fresher and you'll always have the four week menus on hand.

Canned foods and non-refrigerated foods such as rice, beans, pancake mix, pastas, pasta sauce, dried foods, packaged foods, soups, dried fruits, and dried meats (jerky) all have a better shelf life than any refrigerated foods. If you do fill up a freezer with frozen foods, try to use these first in a pandemic situation. Remember, a loss of power even for a short period of time could jeopardize this food source for you unless you are among the few who have a home generator....and enough fuel to keep it running!

## **2. Consider alternate sources of fuel and appliances for heating and cooking.**

**If you rely completely on electricity for cooking and heating, you may want to look for alternatives if something arises to make electricity unavailable. Even the best canned food tastes better when it is warmed, and even if you bundle up in your winter finest, living in a frigid house gets really old really fast!. Here are some possible alternatives.**

**Gas barbeque grills:** Keep your tank full and consider keeping another tank in reserve outdoors, safely away from your house. Remember – do not use a gas grille in a confined area because of the potential for carbon monoxide. (And although we are not recommending them in this document, remember charcoal barbecues put off carbon monoxide in huge quantities, too!)

**Small outdoor wood cooking rings:** Many of us already have small fire rings or non gas grills that could be used to heat water, food or otherwise act as a cooking device. Keep a supply of wood for this purpose.

**Portable camping stove:** These work even better and are relatively inexpensive. Buy extra tanks of propane for the stove and store them away from your house in a safe location. Again, be careful of using them in confined areas.

**Wood stove or fireplace:** Good for both heating and cooking, if you have one of these be sure it and the associated chimney are properly maintained. If you don't have a wood stove and your home might allow for an installation, now might be a very good time to go forward with putting one in. Be sure to consult with the local fire department or building inspector.

If you have (or obtain) a wood stove for heating or otherwise use wood for fuel, keep a good supply of wood all year. A pandemic could occur during any month of the year so having a good wood supply at all times makes sense.

### **3. Personal medications and medical care.**

**We have all become accustomed to running to the store or pharmacy for our medicines. Indeed, many stores and some pharmacies are open 24/7.....today. But in a pandemic emergency, these places are sure to be affected, forced to reduce hours and probably among the first to suffer a shortage of supplies. Remember, a lot of people will probably be sick, and where do you go or send someone for relief when you're sick?**

Stock up now on nonprescription drugs and other health supplies, including pain relievers, stomach remedies, cough and cold medicines, fluids with electrolytes, and multiple vitamins. These will disappear from store shelves very quickly. And here's an update on something that has just happened: stores have begun checking ID's and recording sales of cough and cold medicines containing pseudoephedrine (found in most of the better products). Unfortunately for the vast majority of us who are responsible consumers of these important medications, the illicit drug community has been buying up large quantities to extract the pseudoephedrine as an ingredient of home-brewed methamphetamine. So if you don't want to raise the eyebrows of the Feds, start buying what you think you'll need a little at a time – now.

If you must take prescription drugs regularly, check with your health care provider to see if you can get a 90 day supply. Depending on how you purchase your medicines (by mail, on-line, or at a pharmacy) this might even save you money.

Remember that everyone in your family could be ill at one time or another, so make sure you have adequate supplies for your entire family.

Facing the possibility of serious illness or worse is never easy, and talking about it can be terribly uncomfortable. Nonetheless, we owe it to our families and loved ones to discuss how they, and you, would be cared for if one or more of you fall ill with pandemic flu. If medical care isn't available through the usual channels of doctors, clinics or hospitals, develop some plans for home care.

## **4. Pets are people, too!**

**Planning for a pandemic flu must include all members of our families. Frankly, many of us treat our pets better than ourselves. Even without such a strong emotional attachment, we have a moral and ethical responsibility to include them in our preparations.**

During a pandemic you'll want to make sure they are able to eat. Remember that they will need plenty of water, too. Figure out a month's worth of food for each one and purchase it. This is probably a pretty simple calculation. The food can easily be rotated through their feeding cycle to keep it fresh while still maintaining a month's supply. Your Vet can tell you how much water your pet needs daily based on breed, age and size.

Do not forget the cat litter; it will make everyone's life better if you own an indoor cat!

Does your pet take medications? Talk to your Vet about how to arrange for your pet to have adequate supplies in a pandemic.

## **5. Money**

**A lesson learned from Hurricane Katrina was if regular businesses, banks, and ATM's are not open, cash is the only universally accepted form of payment.**

In a pandemic a lot of people could be ill. Banks may be on limited hours; some may have to close altogether for periods of time. Travel could be restricted. The person who repairs the ATM's may become sick or the machine may not have electricity. Getting cash might be difficult. With that in mind you should consider keeping some cash on hand at all times. Also keep an adequate supply of personal checks if you have a checking account. We are fortunate to live in an area where most businesses will still take a personal check. Remember that using a credit card usually requires electricity for verification or processing so businesses may not be able to accept credit or debit cards during an emergency.

## **6. Communication**

**During a pandemic flu emergency you will want to have as much information about what is occurring as possible. You will also want to be able to contact family, friends, and emergency services providers. In a pandemic there will be a lot of people home with a lot of time on their hands. Internet providers may be overwhelmed with demand for their**

**services which could make getting online more difficult. If you use dial up services for internet this be particularly problematic. Do not rely on any single form of communication method; make contingency plans and have alternatives.**

**Radio:** To supplement your television and internet access (assuming either is still available and operational) you may want to invest in a small AM/FM portable radio that operates with batteries. In addition there are radios that do not require batteries, such as the Grundig brand emergency radio that is hand powered.

You'll want to make sure that you have adequate extra batteries for any communication device requiring them. If you rely on rechargeable batteries keep extra non rechargeable types in stock in case there are power interruptions.

**Telephones:** If you do not already own one, buy a corded basic telephone (the kind you have to plug into a wall outlet). It will work even if the power goes out because the telephone companies (Verizon for most of us) have both battery and generator backup on their systems. Cordless telephones need electricity to operate.

And remember when you tried to make a call on Mothers Day and got an "all circuits are busy" signal or recording? At the beginning of any emergency you may find that many people are trying to call for information or to connect with family, so be patient but persistent.

## **7. Other things to consider:**

**Paper supplies:** Having a stock of diapers for children, toilet paper, paper towels, tissues, and other regularly used paper products is important. During the pandemic you might find these particular items in short supply.

**Home infection control:** You may want to buy "N95" masks (like the ones your doctor or dentist wears) and nitrile gloves (as opposed to latex gloves, to which you can become allergic with extended wear) to use if someone in your house becomes ill, or if you have to leave your home to go to a store or other location during the pandemic.

We strongly urge you to make sure the masks are rated "N95" for your protection. The gloves should also be "surgical grade", but if these are not available, any nitrile or latex glove is better than no protection at all. Just remember these gloves are single use items and should be discarded properly after each use. This sounds expensive, but with some judicious shopping on the internet or in one of the "warehouse" stores you can find reasonable prices. And

rest assured, as soon as a pandemic flu is announced in this country, gloves and masks will become impossible to find!

Teach your children safe infection control procedures prior to the emergency and get them to practice them. Teach your children to wash their hands frequently with soap and water, and model the correct behavior. Teach your children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues, and be sure to model that behavior.

You should keep a quantity of waterless hand disinfectant in your house for use throughout the emergency. Remember that the whole family will be using it for an extended period of time, so make sure you acquire enough.

**Flashlights:** It seems we hear about these in every emergency but with the general reliability of electrical service today, people still don't think about having a flashlight until the lights have already gone out! If you buy or have ones that take batteries, stock up now. Don't forget to buy extra bulbs unless your units have LED's as the light source. A wise investment might be to purchase a few of the new generation flashlights that do not take batteries at all. These "charge" by shaking them and they use the LED light sources that last thousands of hours.

**Entertainment:** If you are a parent of smaller children think of ways to keep them from getting bored. During a pandemic, group functions, social gatherings, and most likely schools will be canceled. How will you keep them occupied? If they are at home who will be taking care of them? If your day care is closed, do you have alternative arrangements that are possible?

Don't neglect some entertainment for the adults in the family, including yourself. If a pandemic strikes, stress levels for all will be greatly elevated. They and you will need some distraction from what are likely to be continuous reports of bad news. Think ahead of some activities you and your family might enjoy doing at home such as games, reading, etc. Don't rely on the internet to provide much "entertainment". Our guess is it will be fairly clogged with traffic about the pandemic.

So at the end of all your planning you are all set! A year passes and the pandemic flu does not occur..... then what? You are fully prepared for any other emergencies such as ice storms, hurricanes, blizzards, wind storms, black outs, and all of the emergencies that can and have occurred here in the Northeast. You will have a good plan, plenty of supplies, and will know what to do. You will be ready.