

How to prepare your home and family, if new virus spreads

March 6 2020, by Marilynn Marchione



A lone container of water sits on otherwise empty shelving at a grocery store in Anchorage, Alaska, Sunday, March 1, 2020. The new coronavirus keeps turning up in more places and health experts say it's wise to prepare for wider spread. People shouldn't panic or hoard large amounts of supplies, they stress, but some common-sense steps that are useful for any emergency or disaster such as severe weather can help get your home and family ready in case you need to hunker

down. (AP Photo/Mark Thiessen)

As the new coronavirus keeps turning up in more places, health experts say it's wise to prepare for wider spread. But people shouldn't panic or hoard large amounts of supplies, they stress.

So what should you do?

Some common-sense steps that are useful for any emergency, such as severe weather, can help get you and your family ready in case you need to hunker down.

More than a dozen states have COVID-19 cases. An outbreak "could last for a long time in your community," the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention warns in its preparation advice.

A good way to think about planning, says former CDC Director Dr. Tom Frieden, is "if you had to be quarantined for 14 days at home," how would you cope?

TALK AND PLAN

Start by talking with [family members](#) about how to take care of each other, discuss emergency preparations with neighbors and investigate resources such as food and meal delivery services in case you can't go out for food, the CDC and others advise.

Consider options for working from home, if possible, and what to do if schools or daycare centers close.

Get copies of any health records you may need.

Pick a room that could be used to separate a [sick person](#) from the rest of the family.

FOOD AND WATER

How much food should you have on hand? The advice varies. CDC's guidance for general emergency preparedness says at least a three-day supply. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security recommends two weeks and Harvard University experts suggest two weeks to 30 days.

"You may not be able to get to a store, or stores may be out of supplies, so it will be important for you to have extra supplies on hand," the Harvard site says.

That means nonperishable and ready-to-eat foods. Consider special needs such as allergies, medical conditions such as diabetes, babies who might need ready-to-feed formula and toddlers who might need shelf-stable milk.

Don't forget about pets.

It seems unlikely that water service would be disrupted, but CDC's general guidance is to have at least three gallons for each person and pet, said Frieden, who now heads an organization promoting global public health.

MEDICINES

Frieden advises having a three-month supply of important medications, such as those for diabetes and high blood pressure. There is a risk that the supply chain for some medications could be interrupted, causing shortages, he explained.

Don't forget other health supplies such as over-the-counter pain relievers and stomach remedies.

Lawrence Yakobzon, a pharmacist at Downtown Pharmacy in New York City, said he noticed this week that more people were stocking up on prescriptions.

"Most people are ordering critical medications such as thyroid, diabetes, heart medications," he said. "It's always a good thing to have extra on hand, [coronavirus](#) or not."

CLEANING SUPPLIES

Clean things that are touched a lot—countertops, light switches, doorknobs, cabinet handles—daily using ordinary detergent and water, the CDC advises.

Deborah Charaman, principal at the Detroit Academy of Arts and Sciences, was following that advice for her workplace, too. She bought spray cans of disinfectant at a CVS in Detroit on Tuesday to wipe down desks and doorknobs at the middle school.

"I want my teachers to feel safe," she said. "We're in a small space and we're bringing our entire community with us every day."

Desmond Browne, who said he was a doctor from Brooklyn, also was buying cleaning supplies at Costco there on Monday.

"It's good that people are preparing in advance" and they should get the most important things they need and not overdo it, he said. There have been reports of crowds and shortages at some stores, but "I got through reasonably quickly," Browne said. "Parking was worse."

© 2020 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed without permission.

Citation: How to prepare your home and family, if new virus spreads (2020, March 6) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-03-home-family-virus.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.