Personal Preparedness Planning For Public Health Workers

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Learning More About Readiness

Part 3 of 3
Essential Planning Elements

- **Know** where to turn for information in a crisis
- **Understand** key health care issues following mass casualty incidents and how you can prepare yourself and your family for these issues
- **Consider** individuals with special needs
- **Understand** answers to FAQs
Information Sources in a Crisis

- Tune to local AM radio for alerts and periodic updates
- Tune to local television news channels
Healthcare Provider Considerations

- Healthcare delivery systems will quickly reach maximum capacity
- Medical advice/physical examinations may be limited
- Elective or postponable surgeries will be cancelled
- Existing health conditions may be complicated during stressful situations
Advance Planning

Things you should do:

- Have all prescriptions
- Keep 3 days of prescriptions on hand at all times
- Have your insurance information available
- Have immunization record handy
- Know style and serial number of medical devices (e.g., pacemakers)
- List known food and drug allergies
- Write down the health conditions of your immediate family
Advance Planning

- Attend a first aid/CPR class
- Memorize two routes to the office of your health care provider
- Hospital visits should be reserved for known exposures, trauma, and other critical health events
- Donate blood to save lives; it will be critically needed
Special Needs Considerations

- Children
- Elderly
- Disabled
- Pets
FAQ #1: Should I Purchase a Gas Mask?

- NO!
- A gas mask will only protect you if you are wearing it during an attack
  - It is highly unlikely that you will know when an attack is coming
- The mask must be of the right type, must fit properly, and requires training to be used effectively
FAQ #2: What About Disposable Masks?

- Disposable, paper masks (e.g., N95 masks) suffer from the same inadequacies as gas masks in a biological weapons attack situation—when to wear the mask, proper fit, etc.—and would likely offer little protection, if any, from a BW attack.

- In addition they provide no protection against chemical attacks.
FAQ #2: What About Disposable Masks?

- Nevertheless—they may help prevent exposure to potentially dangerous substances aerosolized after an explosion.
- Any dense-weave cotton material that snugly covers your nose and mouth can help filter contaminants in an emergency.
- More info at http://www.ready.gov/clean_air.html
FAQ #3: What Is “Shelter-in-Place”?

- **Shelter-in-place** means:
  - Selecting a small, interior room—with no or few windows
  - Sealing the room off to limit airflow (e.g., duct tape/plastic) into the room
  - Taking temporary cover there to reduce exposure to potentially dangerous substances in the air

- It does **not** mean sealing off your entire home or office building

- **Additional resources:**
  - [www.redcross.org/services/disaster/beprepared/shelterinplace.pdf](http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/beprepared/shelterinplace.pdf)
  - [www.ready.gov/stay_or_go.html](http://www.ready.gov/stay_or_go.html)
FAQ # 4: Should I Shelter-in-Place?

- Whether to shelter-in-place depends on the particular circumstances of the attack
- In a **covert biological attack**, you will not know when to seal off a room and stay in there
- Nevertheless, it is possible that circumstances could require sheltering-in-place
  - Listen to health authorities
- More info at [http://www.ready.gov/stay_or_go.html](http://www.ready.gov/stay_or_go.html)
FAQ #5: Should I Stockpile My Own Antibiotics?

- **NO!**
- **Why not?**
  - No single antibiotic protects against all potential bio-weapons agents
  - Ineffective against viruses
  - Limited shelf life
  - Can have serious side effects
  - Should only be taken with medical guidance
FAQ #6: So What Can I Do?

The most important things to do following a mass incident are:

- Remain calm
- Be patient
- Listen carefully to information from and follow the advice of medical and public health authorities
- Implement personal/family preparedness communications plan
- Be accessible and ready to serve in your public health response roles per your health department’s guidance
Where to Get More Information

- By U.S. mail/phone
  - U.S. Department of Homeland Security
    Washington, D.C. 20528
    1-800-BE-READY

- Red Cross USA
  - Visit http://www.redcross.org/ to find your local chapter’s contact information
Where to Get More Information

- http://www.bt.cdc.gov/Agent/agentlist.asp
- http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/beprepared/hsas.html
- http://www.ready.gov/
- http://www.fema.gov/areyouready/
- http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/theme_home2.jsp