

COVID-19: Preparedness Checklist for Individuals and Households

The Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) knows that you and your family may be worried about novel coronavirus (COVID-19). We at CDPH have been working hard for months to ensure we are as prepared as a city as we can be. Based on what we've seen in China and in other countries, most cases of COVID-19 cause a mild illness. To date, children also seem to be less likely to become ill. However, the virus seems to be spreading easily from person to person which puts entire communities at risk. We know from previous public health emergencies that taking small steps to prepare your family can provide you peace of mind and build resilient communities. By taking action now you're not only helping protect yourself and your family, but also helping protect people in your community who are at higher risk of serious illness such as older adults and people with underlying health conditions.

Here are some things that Chicagoans can start doing, right now, to help us all be more prepared for any public health emergency, including COVID-19.

What Can I Do Now to Prepare?

_____ **Wash your hands and cover your cough.** Really. It sounds basic, but washing your hands frequently, with soap and water, or alcohol-based hand sanitizer, is one of the best ways to stop the spread of respiratory viruses, including cold viruses, influenza viruses, *and* novel coronavirus. Teach your children to wash their hands before and after eating, before and after using the bathroom, and any other time their hands become dirty. Wash for 20 seconds (you can sing Happy Birthday twice; 20 seconds is longer than you think). Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue away and wash your hands.

_____ **Try not to touch your face.** Viruses enter your body through your mouth, nose and eyes; touching your face with unwashed hands is one of the best ways they spread.

_____ **Stay home as much as possible if you are sick, unless you need to seek medical care.** This is always important, especially during cold and flu season, but it will be *the* most important thing you can do to help stop the spread of COVID-19 if it begins circulating in the community. If you or your child has a fever, you should not be at work or school. If you have bad cold or flu-like symptoms, please stay home and keep your germs from spreading to others.

_____ **Get a flu shot.** It's not too late to get a flu shot, if you still haven't gotten one this fall or winter. *Everyone* who is at least 6 months old should get a flu shot every year, unless directed otherwise by their doctor. It is certain that anyone who is infected with influenza and COVID-19 at the same time will become much sicker. This is an easy step that can help protect you and those around you. Go to your doctor, pharmacy, or www.ChicagoFluShots.org to learn where to get a flu shot.

_____ **Review your family's health, now, and reach out to your doctor as needed, to make sure you are as healthy as you can be.** We know that most people who have been infected with COVID-19 have mild disease and recover fully, but we also know that people who have underlying health conditions, like heart and lung problems and diabetes, are more likely to become seriously ill if they are infected with COVID-19. Now is the time to make sure your underlying conditions are as controlled as possible and that you are as healthy as you can be.

Make sure you have the medications you need and are taking all of your medications as prescribed; check in with your doctor if needed and make an up-to-date list. If you or your children have asthma or COPD, for example, make sure you have a non-expired inhaler at home. If you have diabetes or hypertension or heart disease, make sure you have all of your medications at home and are taking care of your health. Do the same for any of your other health conditions. Try to eat well, drink enough water, and get enough sleep; this helps build a healthier immune system. Try to exercise at least 30 minutes every day (walking or gentle exercise counts!); this builds

healthier lungs and hearts. Think now about what helps you relax when you are feeling stressed (meditation, prayer, calling a friend) and try to make it part of your daily routine.

_____ **Think ahead about your prescription medications.** Ask your doctor, pharmacist, or insurance company whether you can get an extra 30 days of your prescription medication to have on hand at home, and/or set up home delivery of your medications. Nearly half of Americans take at least one prescription drug. In a health emergency, it's best if healthy people don't need to visit the pharmacy for routine medications.

_____ **Reach out now to build your social circle and share contact information.** Being connected to people around you is one of the most important things you can do to prepare for, respond to and recover from an emergency. It helps with mental health and physical health during times of community stress.

We know people are more likely to help one another in times of community stress when they have been regularly involved in each other's lives. Think especially about members of your community who may need more help and get to know them. Knock on your neighbors' doors and learn about who lives around you, especially those who are elderly, live alone, have a disability or a chronic disease, are pregnant or have young children, care for older people or people with special needs, or depend on electric-powered medical equipment. Think about those who may have trouble paying for food and basic needs. Attend community events. Nurture connections with family, friends, places of worship, schools, and volunteer organizations. Think about who needs to be on your own emergency contact list, but also think about whether you could build connections and be on a contact list for your friends and neighbors. Think now about how to potentially share childcare or eldercare responsibilities; think now about who you might turn to for support if anyone in your family is ill or needs more help at home.

_____ **Think ahead about having some basic supplies on hand at home.** This is not to raise alarm and is not specific to COVID-19 planning; having these items at home is good practice for being prepared for any unexpected events in life. You don't need to stock up for months; just think about what you and your family might need if you were staying home as much as possible for up to two weeks. You may never need these supplies, but having them on hand can also help with your peace of mind. Thinking ahead means you can start purchasing these things now, as your budget allows.

Keep some **basic sanitation and hygiene items** at home, like soap, hand sanitizer, antibacterial wipes, garbage bags, and toilet paper.

Keep some **basic first aid supplies** at home, like an inexpensive digital thermometer, gloves, and bandages. **Over-the-counter medications** are also helpful, including pain and fever relievers (Tylenol/acetaminophen or ibuprofen, including children's versions) and medications to help relieve coughs, colds, or diarrhea.

If you have special **medical supply** needs, try to have at least 30 days of supplies on hand (oxygen supplies, catheters, syringes, blood test monitors and strips, etc.)

Ensure any **medical equipment** you use is in good repair. This includes oxygen equipment, nebulizers, and CPAP machines. It includes hearing aids, glasses, or assistive technologies. If you use a cane, crutch, walker, or wheelchair, ensure it is in good repair.

Think about having **nonperishable or canned food** on hand, including if there are people in your family who need special foods (infants, people with dietary restrictions). Basics like rice, beans and peanut butter are inexpensive and keep well.

Think about the **non-food items you regularly purchase** at the pharmacy or grocery store and try to have at least two weeks' of supplies on hand (basics like toilet paper, toothpaste, menstrual supplies, condoms, batteries for hearing aids, and contact lens solution).

Think about **pet supplies** (including pet medications), **childcare supplies**, and **baby supplies** like diapers.

_____ **Stay up-to-date with trusted health information sources.** For the latest on coronavirus, go to the CDPH website at www.chicago.gov/coronavirus or the CDC website at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus.