



Emergency Preparedness Week - May 3 to 9, 2009

~ A message from your Regional Emergency Management Organization ~

Emergency preparedness begins at home. When individuals and families are prepared, there's less chance that they will need scarce community resources when an emergency occurs. With so much attention currently focused on the spread of H1N1 (Human Swine Influenza), Emergency Preparedness Week is a great opportunity to remind the public that it is important to be prepared for the possibility of an influenza pandemic.

Prevention

The first step in emergency management is Prevention. Taking preventative action is the best way to stay healthy:

- Wash your hands often and thoroughly in warm, soapy water or use hand sanitizer
- Cough and sneeze in your arm, not your hand
- Keep common surfaces and items clean and disinfected
- Stay home (from school, work, and public places) if you are sick, unless you need medical care
- For more prevention tips visit: www.gov.ns.ca/hpp; a toll free info line is being operated by the Department of Health from 8:00 am to 8:30 pm at 1-800-454-8302

Preparedness

As with any potential hazard or threat, you should create an individual and family emergency plan to help you Be Ready for an outbreak in our area.

Step 1. Make your list

What supplies might you need to cope with the event? What items would your family require to get them through a week or more of flu like symptoms? Consider the following:

- Tissues
- Garbage bags to contain used tissues
- Toilet paper
- Cleaning supplies (to keep washrooms, doorknobs, and surfaces clean in your home)
- Flu medications (consider what over the counter medications you normally use to get over flu like symptoms. This may include pain relievers, anti-histamine type medications, cough medicines, vitamin C, naturopathic supplies) or whatever you and your family members normally use to get over the flu.
- Easy to prepare foods (soups, crackers, stews) Whatever your family likes to eat when sick
- Juices, drinks, popsicles (to stay hydrated when a fever is present and you may not feel like eating)

Step 2 Stock your supplies

Buy the items on your list and set them aside with your 72 hour preparedness kit. Consider buying one or two items on your list every time you go grocery shopping until you have your list complete. Having these items on hand means you won't have to go get them when you are ill or when supplies may be low.

Step 3 Build your contact and resource lists

Consider what and who you might need to help you out if you were sick.

- Are there child care contacts you could call?
- Are there work numbers you should have at hand?
- Are there resources that could enable you to work from home if you were too sick to go to work or needed to stay home for family members?
- Do you have phone numbers for people you might need to check on such as elderly family members and neighbours?

Step 4 Talk about your plan

Emergency plans should be shared. Talk to all your family members about what you plan to do, what you might need help with, and how they can help. Make sure everyone knows where your emergency supplies are. Talk to neighbours and relatives and your contacts to ensure they would be able to provide what you are counting on them for!

Step 5 Relax

Being prepared means you don't have to be scared. Once you know how you and your family could cope and you have the supplies you need you can relax in the knowledge that you have done what you can. Get lots of rest, drink lots of fluids, get appropriate exercise and eat healthy foods to boost and maintain your immune system

To mark Emergency Preparedness week, the Emergency Management Office has produced a medical information checklist that can be used to help Nova Scotians in case of an emergency. The checklist includes information on prescriptions, doctors and emergency contacts, and should be placed in a sealable plastic bag and attached to the inside of the front door. The information will assist emergency responders, and help residents who may have to quickly evacuate their homes. The checklist is designed to ensure privacy, so that personal medical information cannot be seen by visitors to the home. Nova Scotians are encouraged to pick up the free checklist being distributed by many pharmacies in Nova Scotia, home-care and community-housing networks, the Canadian Red Cross, and through the Emergency Management Office website, www.gov.ns.ca/emo. It also includes useful information on how to prepare a home emergency kit.