



What You Should Do During Disease Outbreaks

When contagious disease is spreading, whether it is the flu or something else, medical and emergency management professionals advise precautions to limit your exposure to the disease and infecting others if you do get sick. These tips are compiled from expert recommendations shared with reporters.

Basic Health Precautions

Wash Your Hands

Washing your hands thoroughly with soap and water any time you use the bathroom or use public spaces should be standard practice for all of us, but it is particularly important to keep this up during times when contagious diseases are spreading, like during flu season.

Sneeze and Cough Into Your Sleeve

When you sneeze or cough, little droplets carrying germs leave your nose and mouth. It is a good practice to direct your sneezes and coughs into your sleeve rather than into your hands, which can spread germs to other services and people when you touch them.

Avoid Touching Your Face

Germs on our hands typically enter our bodies through the mouth, nose, and eyes, so it is important to avoid touching your face. If you need to touch your face, use a tissue.

Surgical Masks Aren't Necessary—Unless You're Already Sick

Surgical masks are most effective at keeping you from passing along germs to others, so they are really only useful if you are already sick and are trying to avoid spreading infection to others.

Be Thoughtful About When You Go to the Doctor

If you feel sick and have general symptoms like those of the flu or a cold, treat them at home and track your improvement, or call your doctor to ask about treatment. If your symptoms become worse, or you have trouble breathing, that is the time to go to the doctor or the hospital.





Things to Have at Home

First Aid Supplies

It is always a good idea to have basic first aid supplies on hand, including bandages, gauze, antibiotic ointment, a thermometer, a decongestant, an anti-inflammatory drug, and a fever-reducing drug.

Prescription Medications

If you fall sick, or if disease is spreading and people are advised to stay home, getting refills of your medications may be difficult. Make sure your prescriptions are up to date and that you have at least two weeks' supply on hand.

Potable Water

A supply of water that is safe to drink is another standard emergency supply item.

Shelf-Stable Food

When there is a local outbreak of a disease and people are advised to stay at home, having a few weeks' worth of shelf-stable food supplies on hand can keep you from having to venture out to the grocery store and risk infection in public places. Shelf-stable foods can include canned food, pasta, cereals, nuts, and dried fruit. Anything that does not need to be refrigerated to be eaten safely is another standard emergency supply.

Activities to Keep Busy

When people stay home because they do not want to risk catching or spreading a disease, they run the risk of boredom. Keep some things to do, read, and watch at home so you are prepared in the event you need to stay in. You can always renew your library items over the phone or online.

Read More about These Recommendations

- "How to prepare for coronavirus in the U.S." by Reis Thebault, Alex Horton, and Lateshia Beachum for *The Washington Post*, <https://wapo.st/3akgX0R>
- "Just for Kids: A Comic Exploring the New Coronavirus" by Malaka Gharib for *NPR*, <https://n.pr/32CTHIQ>

