

PANDEMICS

FAMILY EMERGENCY PLAN

Reduce exposure. Maintain care. Keep the household functioning.

PURPOSE

This plan is written for families facing a pandemic or widespread infectious-disease emergency that disrupts healthcare, school, work, supply chains, travel, caregiving, and normal routines. It emphasizes current public-health guidance, household infection reduction, medication continuity, isolation/care planning, and sustained family operations.

THE FAMILY PRIORITY ORDER

- 1 PROTECT HIGH-RISK HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS**
- 2 REDUCE TRANSMISSION**
- 3 MAINTAIN MEDICAL CARE AND MEDICATION**
- 4 PRESERVE FOOD, INCOME AND CAREGIVING CONTINUITY**
- 5 ADJUST AS OFFICIAL GUIDANCE CHANGES**

ReadyParent Preparedness Series | Pandemics Edition

Source-informed by FEMA / Ready.gov, CDC, HHS, state/local public health, and established household infection-control guidance.

OPERATING PRINCIPLE

Pandemic preparedness is a continuity problem as much as an infection-control problem.

A family may need to function for weeks or months while guidance, disease severity, school schedules, work requirements, treatment, vaccination, and supply conditions change. The plan must be flexible and based on current public-health and medical recommendations rather than fixed rules from a past outbreak.

What pandemics can do to a household

Pandemics can cause widespread illness, healthcare demand, absenteeism, school or childcare disruption, medication or supply shortages, travel changes, financial pressure, and prolonged stress. Risk may differ substantially by age, pregnancy, immune status, chronic illness, occupation, and the specific pathogen.

Before the hazard develops

The family should complete the following actions before conditions deteriorate or an incident begins.

PART ONE

HOW TO PREPARE

Build household medical and continuity capacity

- Maintain current medication lists, allergies, medical conditions, clinician contacts, pharmacy information, insurance details, and vaccination records where appropriate.
- Keep a reasonable supply of prescription medicines when legally and medically feasible, and know how to obtain refills if the usual pharmacy or clinic is disrupted.
- Keep thermometers, basic over-the-counter medicines used safely by your household, tissues, soap, cleaning supplies, and well-fitting masks/respirators appropriate to the hazard and current guidance.
- Identify a room or area that can be used to reduce close contact with a sick household member when feasible. Plan ventilation/air-cleaning improvements appropriate to the disease and public-health advice.
- Plan for school closure, remote work, dependent care, pet care, and who can assist if the primary caregiver becomes ill.

Protect continuity without hoarding

- Maintain a practical buffer of normal household food, hygiene, and essential supplies so the family can reduce unnecessary trips during periods of high transmission or illness.
- Keep emergency savings and backup payment methods where possible. Review employer sick-leave, remote-work, school, and childcare policies before a crisis.
- Identify high-risk household members and discuss individualized precautions and treatment plans with their healthcare professionals.

PANDEMIC INFORMATION RULE

Use current CDC, state/local public-health, and healthcare guidance for the specific disease. Do not assume that masking, isolation duration, testing, treatment, or vaccination recommendations from a previous pandemic automatically apply to a new one.

PART TWO

STAY SAFE DURING

During a pandemic, the family should continuously adapt to the actual pathogen, local transmission, healthcare capacity, and current public-health recommendations. The objective is to reduce preventable exposure while keeping essential care, income, food, education, and caregiving functioning.

If illness enters the household

- Follow current medical and public-health guidance for testing, treatment, isolation or separation, masks/respirators, ventilation, hygiene, and return to normal activities.
- Monitor temperature and symptoms when relevant. Keep a simple record of onset, medications, fluid intake, and concerning changes for anyone significantly ill.
- Contact a clinician early for high-risk people when treatments are time-sensitive. Know where emergency care is available if routine offices are overwhelmed.
- Separate personal items and improve ventilation/air cleaning when recommended and feasible. Clean high-touch or contaminated surfaces using product instructions and disease-specific guidance.

Escalate for medical danger signs

- Call 911 or seek emergency care for severe breathing difficulty, chest pain/pressure, new confusion, inability to wake or stay awake, blue/gray lips or skin, severe dehydration, seizures, or other emergency symptoms identified by health authorities for the disease.
- Do not delay emergency care because of fear of exposure. Tell dispatch or the healthcare facility about suspected infectious illness so they can direct safe arrival procedures.

Maintain household operations

- Consolidate errands and use delivery or low-contact options when appropriate. Protect the caregiver from unnecessary exposure.
- Use one reliable family information source and a scheduled check-in rather than continuous alarming media coverage.
- Maintain routines for sleep, meals, school/work, exercise, faith/community connection, and children's emotional stability as conditions allow.

CARE CAPACITY RULE

If every adult caregiver is sick or a medically dependent family member is deteriorating, activate the backup caregiver plan early. Do not wait until the household can no longer provide safe food, medication, supervision, or transportation.

PART THREE

AFTER THE DISASTER

The end of a major wave does not necessarily mean the family can immediately return to old assumptions. Recovery includes medical follow-up, resupply, financial repair, school/work transition, and preparing for possible future waves or new guidance.

Restore medical and household reserves

- Replace medications and supplies used during illness. Update medical records with diagnoses, treatments, and significant complications.

- Clean and maintain reusable respiratory or air-cleaning equipment according to manufacturer guidance. Replace expired or depleted supplies.
- Review whether caregiving, isolation space, telehealth, pharmacy access, or school/work arrangements actually worked.

Watch for persistent health effects

Some infections can cause prolonged symptoms or complications. Seek healthcare evaluation for persistent or worsening symptoms, especially in children, older adults, pregnant people, or anyone with chronic disease.

Rebuild routines deliberately

Children and adults may carry anxiety, grief, academic disruption, job loss, or caregiver fatigue after a pandemic period. Restore predictable routines and seek professional support when distress is persistent or interferes with daily function.

AFTER-ACTION QUESTION

What caused delay, confusion, separation, loss of information, unnecessary exposure, or a preventable failure of supplies? Correct that weakness while the event is still fresh in the family's memory.

FAMILY PANDEMICS READINESS STANDARD

The plan is ready when the family can answer these questions without guessing.

✓	Who in our household is at higher medical risk and what does their clinician recommend?
✓	How will we obtain prescription refills during disruption?
✓	Where can a sick person recover with reduced close contact if needed?
✓	Who provides childcare, pet care, or transportation if the primary caregiver is sick?
✓	Which official public-health sources will we use?
✓	Do we have practical household supplies without relying on last-minute shopping?
✓	What symptoms require emergency medical care?

PRACTICE STANDARD

Once a year, review medication lists, backup caregivers, school/work policies, household respiratory protection and cleaning supplies, and the room/area that could support a sick family member. Update the plan whenever a high-risk household member's medical situation changes.

REFERENCE BASIS

AUTHORITATIVE SOURCES USED FOR THIS PLAN

This ReadyParent plan consolidates widely accepted U.S. preparedness, response, safety, and recovery guidance specific to pandemics. Local instructions and incident-specific guidance take priority.

Ready.gov — Pandemic — <https://www.ready.gov/pandemic>

Household pandemic preparation, health, supplies, and continuity.

CDC — Respiratory Viruses: Prevention — <https://www.cdc.gov/respiratory-viruses/prevention/index.html>

Current prevention strategies and additional precautions for respiratory illness.

CDC — Emergency Preparedness and Response — <https://emergency.cdc.gov/>

Disease-specific and emergency public-health information.

HHS — Public Health Emergency — <https://aspr.hhs.gov/>

Federal health preparedness and response information.

Ready.gov — Make a Plan — <https://www.ready.gov/plan>

Family communication, medical, caregiving, and continuity planning.

Publication note

Guidance reviewed August 2026. This document is educational preparedness guidance and does not replace instructions from local emergency management, law enforcement, fire/EMS, public-health authorities, utilities, building officials, event security, or other agencies with jurisdiction. Conditions vary by location and incident; when official instructions conflict with this plan, follow the official instructions.