



# Preparing for a Public Health Emergency

— *What You Need To Know* —



**Just as families in Michigan must be prepared for winter storms, tornados and power outages, we must also be prepared for biological, chemical or radiological disasters. Each of these public health threats are very different and require unique responses. You should begin learning about these threats so you are better prepared to react and protect your family.**

**This booklet provides basic information about terrorist attacks and disease outbreaks. It also includes a section for you to fill in your family's health information so that you can be prepared to receive medical services during an emergency. Please develop a family emergency plan and discuss it with your family.**

**Examples  
of  
Public  
Health  
Emergencies**

# **Anthrax**

## **Description**

Anthrax is an infection caused by bacteria. The bacteria can enter the body by breathing it in, by coming into contact with it through cuts in the skin, or by eating something containing the bacteria.

## **Symptoms**

**Skin** – sore(s) with black centers

**Respiratory** – flu-like symptoms that progress to severe breathing problems

**Intestinal** – nausea, loss of appetite, diarrhea, fever, and bad stomach pain.

## **Immediate Action / Treatment**

- Contact your health care provider if you think you have been exposed.
- Anthrax is not known to spread from one person to another.
- Antibiotics are used to treat anthrax exposure.

## **More Information**

- [www.michigan.gov/ophp](http://www.michigan.gov/ophp)  
Click on public information.
- [www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/anthrax](http://www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/anthrax)

# **Botulism**

## **Description**

Botulism is a muscle-paralyzing illness caused by a bacterium that produces a poison.

## **Symptoms**

Blurred/double vision, dry mouth, muscle paralysis that may affect breathing, swallowing and facial movements. Can enter the body through the mouth, lungs or open wounds.

## **Immediate Action / Treatment**

- Seek medical care immediately.
- Botulism is not spread from person to person.
- If treated early, medicine may block the toxin.
- Supportive care may also be needed.

## **More Information**

- [www.michigan.gov/ophp](http://www.michigan.gov/ophp)  
Click on public information.
- [www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/botulism](http://www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/botulism)

# *Smallpox*

## **Description**

Smallpox is a serious infection that is caused by a virus. It results in a rash that blisters. It spreads easily from person to person.

## **Symptoms**

Fever and body aches. Rash appears 7-17 days after infection starting in the mouth, followed by the face, arms and legs. The victim can spread smallpox to others from the time the rash first appears until the last scab falls off.

## **Immediate Action / Treatment**

- Contact your health care provider immediately for instructions.
- Persons at greatest risk are household members and those who have had face-to-face contact with a victim after the onset of the rash.
- To stop the spread of smallpox, close contacts of those who are ill may be vaccinated and asked to stay home.

# ***Smallpox (continued)***

- Before exposure, smallpox vaccine can prevent the disease.
- After exposure, vaccination within 3 days will prevent or lessen the effects of the disease.

## **More Information**

The United States has enough smallpox vaccine for everyone in the country, should it be needed. Those at risk of complications from the smallpox vaccine should talk it over with their doctor.

- [www.michigan.gov/ophp](http://www.michigan.gov/ophp)  
Click on public information.
- [www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/smallpox](http://www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/smallpox)

# ***Pandemic Influenza***

## **Description**

A new flu virus that spreads among people across the world. In the past, influenza pandemics have led to high levels of illness, death, social disruption, and economic loss.

## **Symptoms**

Common flu symptoms are fever, headache, tiredness, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, and body aches. Diarrhea and vomiting also can occur but are more common in children.

## **Immediate Action / Treatment**

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home from work or school if you have a fever.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze (throw the tissue away after use).
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze.
- Seek medical care early.
- Antiviral drugs are available for people with high risk of complications.

***(continued)***

## **More Information**

- [www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu)
- [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov)
- [www.michigan.gov/influenza](http://www.michigan.gov/influenza)

# *Nerve Agents*

● **VX** ● **Sarin** ● **Soman** ● **Tabun**

## **Description**

Type of chemicals, related to pesticides, can be deadly to humans and animals. They are easily absorbed by swallowing, breathing, and by skin or eye contact. They can be clear or amber colored, odorless, or have a fruity or camphor smell.

## **Symptoms**

Symptoms can appear within seconds to hours and may include tearing, runny nose, drooling, twitching, chest tightness, cramps, nausea, vomiting or seizures.

## **Immediate Action / Treatment**

- Call 911 immediately. Follow instructions from the authorities.
- Get to fresh air; move upwind from the chemical release.
- If eyes are affected, flush with clean water for 10-15 minutes or as directed by emergency responders.

# ***Nerve Agents (continued)***

- Remove clothing by cutting it off. Do not pull it over your head.
- Wash yourself with soapy water.
- Double bag the exposed clothing and seal tightly.

## **More Information**

Possible Signs of a Chemical Release:

Unusual numbers of sick or dead people, birds, fish or animals in one area. Unusual metal debris, liquid droplets, low-lying clouds of fog or dust. Do not touch anything in these areas, call 9-1-1.

- [www.atsdr.cdc.gov/tfacts166.pdf](http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/tfacts166.pdf)
- [www.michigan.gov/ophp](http://www.michigan.gov/ophp)  
Click on public information.

# *Dirty Bomb*

## **Description**

Explosive device packaged with radioactive materials. Primary danger may be from the blast itself. Radioactive materials expelled in the blast could potentially contaminate people near and downwind of the blast site.

## **Symptoms**

Injuries caused by bomb exploding. Not enough radioactive material will likely be present in a dirty bomb to cause severe health effects. However, radioactive materials released into the air, could contaminate several city blocks. Radiation from these materials cannot be seen, smelled, felt, or tasted. Extended exposure to these materials can be dangerous.

## **Immediate Action / Treatment**

- Think about distance, shielding and time; cover your mouth/nose, walk several blocks upwind from the blast site and go inside.

## ***Dirty Bomb (continued)***

- Emergency responders will test and determine if radioactive materials are present. Follow their directions for decontamination, which means washing off all dust, dirt, and radioactive materials.
- Seek medical attention if advised to do so.

### **More Information**

If radioactive material is released during a bomb explosion, local news broadcasts will advise you where to report for radiation monitoring and what steps you should take to protect your health.

- [www.bt.cdc.gov/radiation/dirtybombs.asp](http://www.bt.cdc.gov/radiation/dirtybombs.asp)





**CREATING  
A  
FAMILY  
EMERGENCY  
PLAN**

# BE PREPARED

## *1: Plan Ahead*

Your family may not be together when disaster strikes. Here are some things you can do to prepare:

- Discuss with your family the types of disasters most likely to happen and what each family member should do.
- Plan how you will contact one another.
- Keep some essential supplies on hand for emergencies: drinking water, dry or canned food, a battery-powered radio, first aid supplies, a flashlight and batteries, prescription medication, sanitary supplies, and special items for babies and family members with special needs.
- Sources for more information:  
**[www.michigan.gov/emd](http://www.michigan.gov/emd)** (click on “Family Preparedness Guide”),  
**[www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov)** and **[www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)**.

## *2: Learn More*

Learn about diseases, treatments and how your family's medical conditions may be affected. Read up on key terms such as isolation, quarantine, sheltering-in-place and evacuation. For facts, visit [www.bt.cdc.gov/](http://www.bt.cdc.gov/) and [www.michigan.gov/ophp](http://www.michigan.gov/ophp) (click on public information).

## *3: Get Involved*

Ask your employer, school and daycare facility whether they have developed emergency plans. Employees and parents who are frequently at these sites need to work with managers to make plans for these sites to serve as safe havens. To learn more about getting involved in your community planning efforts, contact your local health department [www.malph.org/page.cfm/18](http://www.malph.org/page.cfm/18) or the Michigan Citizens Corps [www.michigan.gov/mcsc](http://www.michigan.gov/mcsc).

## *4: Be Alert During an Emergency*

Tune in to your television and radio news stations for emergency messages and important safety instructions from government authorities.

# *Health and Emergency Information*

If mass immunizations or medical services are needed for a large-scale emergency, your local health department may set up a dispensing site to give vaccines, antibiotics, or antidotes. Listen to news reports and follow instructions from officials about who should go to the sites, when to go, and where they are located.

If you are directed to a dispensing site, you will need to bring important information with you. Please fill in the forms located on the following pages for you and your family members. You may need quick access to family medical information in order to pick up medications for them.

In addition, you should also bring the following for each family member: picture ID, medical records (including current medications and allergies) and current age and weight of children.

## FAMILY MEMBER

Steven

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**DATE OF BIRTH AND WEIGHT OF CHILD IF UNDER 90 POUNDS:**

04/10/1995, 74 LBS.

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**FOOD AND MEDICINE ALLERGIES:**

Eggs, Penicillin

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**LIST MEDICAL CONDITIONS,**

**LIST SPECIAL NEEDS:**

Asthma, Eczema, Hearing Impaired

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**LIST MEDICATIONS AND DOSE:**

Albuterol 2 puffs, 2-4 times/day

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Keep this information with you in case of an emergency.

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## NOTES:

**Michigan Department of  
Community Health  
Office of Public Health  
Preparedness**  
**[www.michigan.gov/ophp](http://www.michigan.gov/ophp)**

**Additional Resources**

**U.S. Centers for Disease Control  
and Prevention  
(800) CDC-INFO  
(800) 874-2646 TTY  
[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)**

**Poison Control Center  
(800) 222-1222  
[www.1-800-222-1222.info](http://www.1-800-222-1222.info)**

**Michigan State Police  
[www.michigan.gov/emd](http://www.michigan.gov/emd)**

*Michigan Department  
of Community Health*



Jennifer M. Granholm, Governor  
Janet Olszewski, Director



Office of Public Health Preparedness