



SURVIVAL PAPER #SP84-16

Survival Papers is a service program of Live Free, USA, P.O. Box 375, Dolton, IL 60419-9998, USA,
www.live-free.org. Dedicated to the support of responsible preparedness and self-reliance

MEDICAL PREPARATIONS FOR THE SURVIVALIST

This topic was originally written in 1984 by J. Dierking. Since this topic was initially written twelve years ago, many things have changed in the health care field. Also, many changes have occurred in the political arena that were considered fantasy in 1984. For example, the fall of the Soviet Union, the collapse of the Berlin Wall, and the reunification of Germany were not even considered a possibility in 1984. So we hope to update the information originally presented and provide alternatives that were not even considered in the original paper.

INADEQUATE FACILITIES

Most doctors and hospital administrators are honest, at least amongst themselves, and by law to Federal inquiries about the state of health care in the United States today.

While our present health care system is adequate for today's needs, it does show some areas that need great improvement. What are these areas? Basically, these are in the treatment of large numbers of patients at any one time.

Our health care system is set up to take care of one person at a time. Procedures for mass treatments and facilities are sadly lacking. Practice, even where procedures or facilities are available, is on an inconsistent basis. So when a catastrophe occurs and there are large numbers of patients, the system breaks down. In the past 5 years, there have been three instances where this was demonstrated very well.

The Oklahoma City bombing – Survivors were transported to hospitals as far away as New York for treatment, because local hospitals were overburdened or the treatment needed for burn or broken bone victims was not available except in certain hospitals.

The L.A. riots caused a total collapse of the L.A. hospitals and medical facilities, and injured persons were transported all over the state to hospitals that would take the victims or had room.

The Florida hurricane that devastated a large area of Florida - A lot of hospitals were damaged, and patients and injured had to be transported to hospitals in the state that would take them.

The numbers of injured in these cases never exceeded 1,000 people in most cases, but the large influx of injured and the damage to some health care facilities denied care to these people. It also caused a great burden to those hospitals. Facilities that were sent the overruns of patients were overburdened themselves and many were unable to provide basic services that were needed in their communities. All this was in the news at the times.

If 100 injured can overwhelm the local health care facilities, what might happen if thousands or tens of thousands were hurt or injured at one time? At best, it would be chaos to get a doctor's

appointment. At worst it might lead to collapse of medical treatment, as we know it. What are you going to do if you can't get into the hospital or get to see a doctor? What if the ambulances or police or firemen are not helping take you to the hospital if you have an accident? What if your local emergency room has to be closed down because they can't get insurance or doctors to man the building? It is already happening in some cases. Can you wait until morning? Can you drive 50 miles or more to a hospital that is open? WHAT CAN YOU DO?

EDUCATION

The first step is education.

There is no way you can become knowledgeable overnight in the medical field other than through education. And there is no way you are going to be able to care for yourself other than by educating yourself. Remarkably, there is a great body of information available for anyone interested in educating themselves. There are also many groups and ways you can acquire this information yourself.

FIRST AID/CPR – At the absolute minimum, everyone should have basic First Aid and CPR training. Take the advanced courses as soon after the basic courses as you can, as this helps you remember and answer the questions correctly on the first aid tests. Many places and groups provide first aid training and CPR training. The American Red Cross Association has classes going all the time. Call your local chapter for information. Many churches provide this training to its members as a benefit of membership. Clubs offer these courses to their members and colleges always have a course going somewhere.

HOME NURSING/HOME CARE CLASSES – This is Advanced CPR and First Aid training along with orderly and basic nursing skills. You learn to change bedding, adult diapers, adult sanitation, adult hygiene, administer basic medications, take blood samples, take stool or urine samples, take blood pressure and temperature readings and records management. These courses are taught by local hospitals, some churches, colleges, nursing schools and by some home health agencies. Possible other places where instruction is available would be the Department of Human Services, Human Resource agencies, and nursing homes (retirement homes).

PARAMEDIC/EMT CLASSES – Usually these are offered by hospitals. Ambulance or rescue squads/services and firefighters also take these courses quite often as a result of a First Responder type of initiative where firefighters are dispatched to take care of injured instead of ambulances or paramedic or EMT squads. Rescue squads usually have at least one person on duty that is a paramedic or an EMT. Colleges offer these courses also.

First thing, paramedic and EMT training is different. The paramedic courses are harder and more exhaustive, but you are better trained. This does not mean the EMT courses are a pushover though.

Both courses require 3 to 6 months in classroom training, one to three nights a week. Both courses require hospital emergency room work usually one or two nights a week and weekends for the length of the course. Both courses teach emergency treatment of wounds, broken bones, heart attacks, etc. Both courses teach the use of prescribed drugs, Schedule II or Schedule III drugs (Schedule II drugs are prescribed drugs and Schedule III drugs are prescribed and administered drugs under doctor's direction), and the knowledge to suture up a wound, open emergency airways and do a whole host of things that are necessary to begin treatment of a patient on their way to the hospital.

Either course would be good to take if you can afford the time and the cost. Some areas require you to have a reason to take these courses and will not enroll anyone who does not have a hospital or ambulance, firefighting, rescue or law enforcement background.

FRIENDLY DOCTORS AND NURSES – It has been suggested that a friendly doctor or nurse would provide instruction to you on an individual basis. This would be an ideal situation if you have it available to you, but is not often an option to the vast majority of us readers. My doctor is nice and friendly. He always has a kind word or good joke to tell, but he sure does not have the time to spend with me training me in the medical arts. Instead he would rather be on the golf course or taking a trip for a vacation, etc. Nor should I realistically expect him to take time out of his personal life to accommodate my training.

If you are lucky and have this option available to you, take it and run! For the rest of us, it might not be a bad idea to get off our duffs and get this training ourselves.

DENTAL – An often-overlooked area of consideration is dental preparations. If you have ever had a bad toothache, you know that nothing hurts as badly as a toothache. Not many places teach dental first aid, but there is one book on the market, “Where There is Not a Dentist”, by the Hesperian Foundation. This book can be ordered through your local bookstores and is very valuable.

ALTERNATIVE THERAPIES – Many doctors do not like to offer alternatives to regular medical sciences. However, many are becoming more and more accepted in the medical profession and can be useful if you educate yourself in the fields before you use them.

Naturopathy-Herbal Medicine is very close to regular medical practice. In fact, many drugs are made using natural herbs as the prime ingredient. Using these herbs yourself is a lot less hard on your system since plants are usually not as concentrated as most drugs are. The FDA has made health food stores and Naturopathic drug sellers quit making claims about the usefulness of their herbs. But just because it has not been tested by the FDA as a drug does not mean that it does not do the job advertised, especially if it is the main ingredient in regular medicines.

Chiropractor – Aligns your spine to cure or ease a host of ailments. Many folks swear by them and others swear at them. Try it, you might like it. If you don't, then you are not any worse off than you were when you went in.

Acupuncture – Use of needles to block nerve endings to help the body heal or to improve bodily functions. I have tried this in a dentist's office. It works, but I did not like the feeling of the needles in my body. It may be better for you than it was for me, so if you feel you need it, give it a shot.

Holistic – Spiritually healing -- the soul helps heal the body. A difficult concept. One example I have seen, is doctors advocating a positive mental attitude to help overcome long-term sicknesses. It should at least play a part in your total health care plans.

Homeopathy – The idea of “like curing like”. An example: A bee sting would be treated by massive doses of bee venom. This treatment has grown in popularity and has many regular doctors using it as treatment for illnesses that are impossible to treat or cure using regular medical methods.

Aromatherapy – Treatment of diseases using smells to overcome sicknesses.

Other therapies – Garlic therapies, mudpack therapies, mask therapies, and a whole host of other therapies all intended to ease pain, cure disease or improve health.

Many doctors may scoff at these health care alternatives, but they may help you, and if they do, they deserve to be in your survival preparations.

SOURCES

Medicine has a whole host of sources a person may want to acquire. And, depending on how specialized you want to become, you can acquire books, magazines and information on just about any subject you might be interested in.

Starting out though, it is important to start with the basic sources. These provide the working language, the learning diagrams, and the basics, as it were.

Control of Communicable Diseases – in Man from American Public Health Association.

The Physician's Desk Reference – from Medical Economics, Oradell, NJ

The Merck Manual of Diagnosis and Therapy – from Merck, Sharpe, and Dohme, West point, Pennsylvania

*Ship's Medicine Chest and First Aid at Sea – from Public Health Service

*US Army Special Forces Medical Handbook – by Glen K. Craig, available from Paladin Press and a host of other sources.

Emergency Care of the Sick and Injured – by Kennedy from Saunders.

Mountaineering Medicine – by Angier and Kodet from Association

*Where there is No Doctor
and

*Where There is No Dentist – by the Hesperian Foundation, PO Box 1690, Palo Alto, CA 94302-1692

Forgey's Wilderness Medicine – Indiana Camp Supply, P.O. Box 2166, Loveland, CO 80539

*Survivalist's Medicine Chest – by Ragnar Benson and available from Paladin Press and a host of other sources

Surprisingly good medical books can be purchased secondhand from almost any college campus. Try after each quarter or semester and look through the books. If one looks interesting, then chances are it is not very expensive, and you will be able to get a whole lot of information for very little cost.

*Author has in his collection and strongly recommends!

PREVENTION

Personal hygiene and sanitation is the first step to preventing disease. You are responsible for your actions, and if you get a disease because you did not take precautions, then it is your own fault that you caught the disease.

A good example is to wash your hands every time you shake hands with someone, etc., or as soon afterwards as you can, because it is a proven fact that most colds are transmitted from hand contact.

Your hand touches someone with a cold and you do not wash your hands. You then eat or scratch or pick at your face and viola! You have just transmitted a cold to yourself.

Sexually transmitted diseases, tooth decay and tartar buildup are other examples of personal hygiene and sanitation.

Water Purification – In the late 1800s, thousands of folks were dying in the cities from dysentery. Even today, this can and does cause deaths in third world countries. The bacteria from outhouses was polluting the water sources and causing people to get sick.

Today all water sources are polluted in one way or another. Giardia, bacteria, viruses and a host of other pollutants are the culprits. All these little germs can cause a person to be awfully sick and in extreme cases can kill them. An investment in a good water filter is a must nowadays.

Control of Insects and Vermin – Rats, mice and other vermin can spread disease, as can insects such as the cockroach and the mosquito. It is vital that these insects and vermin be controlled with traps, poison or through natural means.

Nutrition – Eating properly is very important. A good breakfast, a healthy lunch and light dinner are good ideas. Remember to eat from all the food groups and to try to stay away from bad foods.

Depending on the activities you do, you will need 1000 to 3000 calories a day. You must have protein in your diet if you are doing any heavy work or if you have children. Most often you need more vegetables and dairy products and more grains will help also. Without a proper diet, you will not have the energy you need to survive or to prosper.

Exercise – I know folks who have never exercised in their lives. They work on the farm and get all the exercise they need doing this, thank you. But for the rest of us, we need to do stretches everyday and sit-ups and push-ups and walk whenever possible. I like going upstairs. Five or six flights a day is the minimum. If I have time, I will go all the way to the top of the 20-story tower and back several times. If you do not have a multi-story office building to walk in, walk around the building you are in. If you can't do this, take a stroll around your block or the grocery store and carry your groceries back with you. Swimming is good exercise and if you have a pool, or if you like swimming, then this is an excuse for you to go swimming.

Dressing Appropriately – it is important that you dress warm in cold weather and cool in hot weather. Getting sick because you forgot your coat or getting heat stroke because you are overdressed is not too smart.

Proper Food Preparation – Cooking food properly is important to prevent food poisoning. Make sure your eggs are well done, your meat is cooked long enough to kill any germs that might be in it, and your vegetables are prepared properly. Food poisoning is not any fun and can kill you if you do not get proper medical attention as soon as symptoms appear.

Proper Inoculations – Getting your shots to prevent disease is important and many of us have already had our shots as children. But did you know that many shots have to have boosters to remain effective? Well, I did not until recently. So make sure you have had your shots and check with your doctor to see if you need updates on any of the following:

- Tetanus
- Mumps
- Smallpox
- Diphtheria
- Chicken Pox

Measles
Polio
Others?

Infections - Whether they be an infected cut or a cold, infections are dangerous and uncomfortable things. And if left untreated could lead to more serious and life-threatening situations. All cuts need to be treated with antiseptic – iodine, alcohol or other germ-killing solutions. They need to be covered or bandaged and let the healing process begin. They may possibly need to be stitched together. Colds or other infections need to be treated seriously with rest, and medication help ease the discomfort of the fever or aches and body pains. Aspirin, Tylenol or other drugs of this sort are good for this. Antihistamines are good for this also. Many formerly prescribed brands have been declassified and are now available over the counter, i.e. Benedryl, Afrin, Dimmetap, etc., to name just a few.

Wounds, Broken Bones, Burns – Depending on the severity, these are usually specialty areas that require specialty knowledge. Bad wounds often require surgery to correct and prevent a patient from dying or getting a bad secondary infection.

Broken Bones – if they are simple fractures are fairly easy to set but take a long time to heal. Compound fractures and other more serious broken bones might require surgery to fully heal the patient. Again, this is something that is better left to a specialist to do or to study hard for in the event you do not have someone skilled enough to help.

Burns – Burns are a complete and lengthy treatment to just heal someone, must less to repair the damage a burn does to the skin. This is another specialty field that it would be best to leave to a specialist.

SUPPLIES

First Aid

Band-Aids – various sizes
Pressure bandages
Gauze Pads – various sizes
Gauze Rolls – various sizes
Cotton balls
Cotton tip applicators
Ace Bandages – various sizes
Butterfly bandages – “ “
Disposable Mask
Disposable Gloves
Petroleum dressings – various
Scissors – various types
Dental mirror with dental picks
Instant heat/cold packs
Wire, Wood or Air splints
Adhesive tape – various types
Triangle bandages
Safety Pins for bandages
Tufskin/Moleskin for blisters

More Advanced Medical Treatment

All the First Aid supplies plus oxygen set up.
Doctor’s exam light with ear cones
Forceps – various kinds
Tourniquets
Needle holder for suturing
Thermometers – oral and rectal
Labstick – urine, pH, etc.
Scalpel with assorted blades
Plaster roll gauze & cotton roll felt for casting
Urinary catheters – nasogastric catheters for lavage
Hemostats – mosquito, Kelly
Burn solution for oral administration
Blood pressure cuff
Stethoscope combination type
IV tubing
IV needles
IV solutions
Airway – child and adults
Ear Curette

Drugs

Iodine antiseptic
Salt tablets
Triple antibiotic ointment
Antihistamines
Anti-diarrhea medicine
Skin salves for Athlete's Foot, ringworm, etc.
Cold medications – i.e., cough drops, cough syrup, cold tablets
Alcohol – swabbing type, not for drinking
Burn cream
Aspirin & Tylenol
Poison Ivy/Oak medication
Poison antidotes such as ipecac syrup and activated charcoal
Antibiotics for infections, etc., usually available by prescription only. Possibly available as vet medicines
Benimid (antibiotic enhancer) - prescription only
Sedatives, hypnotics & tranquilizers for stress – prescription only
Drugs for shock, respiratory and cardiac stimulants, antihypertensives
Painkillers - by prescription only. Use only under a doctor's care and in accordance with his instructions
Muscle relaxants
Steroid treatment for poison ivy/oak
Any others you can think of

It is unlikely that any of the prescribed drugs will be available to you unless you take the EMT/Paramedic courses. Even then, these drugs will be strictly controlled and will be provided only for official use, so do not misuse your authority or you will find that you lose it and your job or your training.

If a physician trusts you with any of these drugs, or if you have to take some and have some leftover, be careful. Many times old drugs lose their potency or become dangerous with age.

Storing drugs in the refrigerator may help prolong the life span of the drugs you have. But if they are over 3 years old or if their expiration date is out, then you would be best served to go to your family doctor and take the old drugs to him and see if he will replace them for you in the event you need them in an emergency.

In today's society, I would not expect a lot of doctors to be eager to replace drugs, as they might be afraid you are a drug abuser or that there might be a chance you would use the drugs incorrectly. Either way could lead to a lawsuit or to possible trouble for the doctor involved. So the best thing you can do is ask, but do not expect a doctor to be happy helping you. And if he does not, then do not get mad at the doctor. Just throw the old ones out and try saving up for some new ones.