

Diaster Preparedness

Drinkable water is your number-one requirement. Humans can go for a month without food, but only a couple days without water. The people in New Orleans must have been frustrated to be so thirsty while surrounded by undrinkable water. A number of them undoubtedly did drink it, causing other problems.

The folks at Hydration Tech have a bag, called the X-Pack, that will convert up to a gallon a day of the most contaminated water imaginable into clean water. The pack requires a sugar solution (such as honey) after the first couple days. It's available from Hydration Tech, at www.HydrationTech.com or 541-917-3335. (As you can imagine, they're very busy right now, and you may have to wait a bit for delivery.)

With a water supply that is essentially clear, you can add regular chlorine bleach to disinfect it. One teaspoon will treat five gallons, or 16 drops for one gallon. If the situation gets desperate, one study showed that simply filtering water through folded layers of cloth (preferably cotton) will remove many of the harmful pathogens.

Wounds or injuries turn nasty quickly in a toxic environment. Disinfect them with chlorine bleach. (Be careful, though. The fumes can injure your eyes, mucous membranes, and lungs.)

Honey is a reliable healer. Spread a layer on the inside of a bandage or dressing before applying it to the wound or burn.

You can stop bleeding, even from a serious gash, with a product called QR topical powder, available at many mass-market retailers. (This is similar to a product I used to recommend called Bleed-X, but that company sells only to the military now.) Sprinkle the contents of one packet (or more as needed) onto the injury and apply pressure.

Antibiotics can be a literal life-saver. You would think you'd need a prescription to buy them, but farmers and ranchers buy antibiotics over the counter at animal feed and supply stores. You can even buy antibiotics over the Internet under the same circumstances, from Web sites such as www.VetMedDirect.com.

Use a variety of tetracycline called Terramycin-343. Dosage for an ill 100-pound person is half a teaspoon, mixed with a little water, twice a day for ten days. Adjust the dosage upward or downward depending on the person's weight. (It tastes pretty bad, so you might want to add a little honey.)

Sanitation can become a problem in a crowd after a few days. A five-gallon bucket makes a reliable toilet. Line it with a heavy-duty plastic bag to dispose of the waste easily. Yes, it will start to smell pretty bad after a couple days, but you can close up the bag and replace it with a new one.

These recommendations may seem a bit extreme to some people, particularly using raw bleach on open wounds and dosing yourself with antibiotics. But remember, these are for dire situations only.

To sum up, here's what you should have in a ready bag (or put it all in the bucket):

- * X-Pack (one for every three people in your group)
- * Honey (two or three pounds in unbreakable containers)
- * Chlorine bleach (a quart in an unbreakable container)
- * QR topical powder (A box or two of their Cuts and Lacerations formula)
- * Terramycin-343 (one 4.78-ounce package)
- * A week's worth of any essential medications or supplements
- * A stash of non-perishable food such as canned fish or nutrition bars
- * A standard first aid kit, with bandages, scissors, antiseptic wipes, et cetera

All of these except the medications and supplements should last nearly indefinitely if kept in a cool, dry place. You'll want to replace the Terramycin if it has turned dark brown from its natural golden yellow color.

Many believed a disaster like this could never happen to them -- but it does happen.

I hope you never have occasion to use this advice, but it's best to be prepared.

Sincerely,

Dr. David Williams