

Chronic Health Issues in a Post-Disaster World

An astonishing 51% of Americans are on long-term medications for chronic health issues. That number is on the rise, up four percent from just a few short years ago. One naturally has to wonder why our society is becoming less healthy, considering all the medical advances in the last century.

A fair amount of this has to do with our own bad habits. Obesity is on the rise, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic, and several of the most common chronic diseases we are facing as a society are directly related to obesity. Others, which may not be associated with obesity are affected by a poor diet lacking in the necessary nutrients, while feeding the body excess sugar, salt and other things that act as poisons when over-consumed.

3 THINGS YOU MUST NEVER (EVER!) DO IN A MEDICAL CRISIS

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I have to ask... just how many people among the ranks of the preppers, are part of that 51%?

We are literally killing ourselves, while expecting our doctors to somehow give us long life, through the ingestion of pills. Yet that long life is largely in our own hands. If we could eliminate bad eating habits, replacing them with a simpler diet, not overloaded with sugar, salt and chemicals; something more like our ancestors used to eat, then we might get rid of many of those chronic health issues.

What we're doing to ourselves today is bad enough; but what about how that will affect us in the wake of a major disaster?

How are all those people going to survive, when the medicines their bodies depend on are not readily available?

William Forstchen barely touched on this topic in his acclaimed best-selling book, "One Second After." In his novel, one of the main character's daughters had Type 1 diabetes and his father-in-law, who was in a nursing home, had some sort of chronic illness. But when we compare that to the number of people suffering from chronic illness, requiring daily or even weekly maintenance doses of medicines, it is clear that he didn't give the subject as much attention as it deserved.

The EMP Commission's report made it eminently clear that we could expect 70 to 90 percent of the population to die in the first year after an EMP. I have to wonder though, whether that was just from starvation, as many quote it, or whether they took into account the number of people who would die, simply from not getting the medications that they needed to care for their chronic conditions. Somehow, I feel that while a large portion of those people may end up being "officially" reported as dying of starvation, the underlying medical reason for their death will actually be something like Type 2 Diabetes, Heart Disease, Strokes, or some other chronic health issue.

I strongly suspect that the first major die-off of people in the wake of any TEOTWAWKI event will be those who have chronic conditions that they are taking maintenance doses of medications for. Once their on-hand stock of those medications is gone, their bodies will have to function without them. The question then becomes... just how well can their body function without those medications.

How can we say that we're prepared, if we're taking a handful of pills every day, and only have enough of those pills to last us a month? What will we do when they run out?

Stockpile Medications

The most obvious thing for any of us to do is to start stockpiling the medications we need for our chronic conditions. Of course, that's easier said, than done. Most of those medications are by prescription only, so we can't just go to the corner pharmacy and pick some extras up.

If you've got a good relationship with your doctor, you might be able to convince them to write you a prescription for an extra six months or even a year's worth of your primary medicines, especially if your condition is stable and your medicine dosages haven't changed for the last few years. But even doing that isn't enough, as a true TEOTWAWKI event, by its very nature, isn't going to make it possible to buy those medications a year later. All that will do, is extend the inevitable.

Another option, for those who can, is to buy your medications in Mexico. The Mexican pharmaceutical industry is excellent, producing everything but the most recent creations, where the patent hasn't expired yet. Their prices are very reasonable and the quality is comparable to buying generic prescription medicines here in the United States. Not only that, but you don't need a prescription for most things.

But even this might not be a good long-term solution. Yes, you can stockpile a year's worth of medicines, or even more, this way. Since most medications are still good long after their "expiration date," you should still be able to use these meds for years. But eventually any stockpile will run out.

Start More Healthy Habits Now

There are some health issues which are totally outside of our control; things that we are afflicted with, rather than what we afflict ourselves with. If we look at cancer, for example,

there are cancers, like lung cancer, which are a direct result of our actions. Smokers are much more likely to get lung cancer than non-smokers, because of inhaling the smoke from their cigarettes. But there are also cancers, such as breast cancers, which people get, without having done anything to bring the cancer on.

Two common diseases which can be brought about by our own actions are high blood pressure (hypertension) and type 2 diabetes. Both have been shown to be related to obesity. So, if we have either of them, we should be working to bring our weight under control. While there is no guarantee that losing weight will eliminate the disease, there are plenty of examples of people who did eliminate their diabetes or high blood pressure by losing weight. I know people who have done so. I've known others who eliminated hypertension by changing their job or eliminating some other source of stress in their lives.

This is not to say that any and all chronic conditions can be solved by making changes to our diets. Only some can. But if there's something we can do which will increase our chances of survival, shouldn't we be doing it? If we're all about survival, then it seems to me that we should do whatever we can, to help ensure our survival, even if that means changing our habits.

Another important aspect of this is exercise. The average prepper isn't in good enough physical shape for a pleasant walk through the woods, let alone carrying a bug out bag. Cutting and splitting logs for the fire for us is a major chore, not something we can just do before breakfast. If we can't do the physical chores that are needed for survival, then we're not in good enough shape.

Find Out What Foods Help or Hurt Our Conditions

Many health conditions can be affected by diet. For example, all diabetics know that they shouldn't be eating sugar or carbohydrates. Here's the kicker though... do we adapt our survival stockpile if we're a diabetic prepper? if we have high blood pressure, do we buy low sodium canned goods, instead of the standard ones? After all, excessive salt can push our blood pressure upwards.

I can't list all the different foods here and what diseases are affected by them, but that information is readily available. If your primary care physician hasn't already given you a list of foods to avoid, then you should be able to find one online.

Keep in mind here that you will probably lose weight in any post-disaster situation, hopefully helping your overall health. But that doesn't mean that you'll necessarily be able to stop taking your meds, without serious consequences. Make sure that you know what you can and can't do.

Find Natural Alternatives That We Can Grow Ourselves

Eventually, I always find myself coming back to natural alternatives to pharmaceutical medicines. That's not to say that I'm an herbal medicine expert or that I'm even against modern pharmaceuticals. Rather, it's just the most logical alternative I can find, for living in a time when we can't get our prescriptions delivered right to our door.

The big problem I see with herbal medicine is that you can't just go to some reference and get a definitive answer as to how much of what herbs you should take and in what form.

Rather, most books and websites on herbal medicine will provide you with a list of possible herbs, that have been shown to have some positive effect on those with certain chronic conditions. You've got to figure it out from there.

One good thing about that is that you can concentrate on trying herbs that you can grow, in whatever part of the country you're living in. You can also try different herbs or different combinations of herbs, seeking out which gives you the best results.

Regardless, you're going to have to do a lot of personal experimentation to figure out just how much of which herbal remedies you'll need. I'd recommend doing that now, while you can still get your prescriptions filled, rather than after a disaster strikes and you're depending on those herbal remedies to keep you alive. If you can keep your symptoms under control now, with just those herbal remedies, you'll actually be ready

Learn the Impact and Intervention Necessary

Having done all this, will you survive? Or, how long will you survive? Those are questions that only time will answer. Looking forward to that time, I would suggest learning to spot the symptoms that your body will display, showing that your home-grown medicines aren't working. Teach your family those symptoms as well, so that they can keep an eye on you. Sometimes, we can't see what's happening in our own bodies, while those around us can.

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There are some chronic conditions we can live with, just as long as we avoid certain activities, such as overactivity. If that's the case, we need to be aware of the limitations our conditions will place on us, during a time of crisis, especially if we run out of our medications. In that case, we need to know how to recognize the onset of symptoms that show we are reaching the limits of our ability.

The next question that this brings us is whether or not there is some sort of medical intervention that can be done to save us. I'm not talking about emergency room intervention; but rather things that we can do for ourselves or that we can train family members to do for us. Some of these chronic conditions can be lived with, if we are ready to take care of outbreaks, when they come. But if the intervention requires something from the pharmacy, it's probably not going to be any better than needing the medications to treat the condition.

Just Be Ready

As you can see, there are a number of options open to us, for taking care of our medical issues in a post-disaster world. The one option that we should not depend on, is our family physician being there to take care of us and our local pharmacy having the medicine that we need. Assuming they survive, they will be overwhelmed with patients who need their help, while suffering through severe supply problems; making it seem like they're trying to work with one hand tied behind

their backs.

Another thing that could happen, in a post-disaster world, is that your county health services could pull all the medical professionals together into one place, so that they can serve the maximum number of people possible. As part of that, they'd probably requisition the stock of pharmaceuticals at every pharmacy. While this will supposedly be done in the name of efficiency; it will only be efficient for those who can get to that central location. If you don't live close, you may not get any medical support at all.