This fact sheet provides information on how families can prepare themselves for a possible pandemic.

BACKGROUND
A severe pandemic (defined as a worldwide epidemic) in a vulnerable population, such as the 1918 flu pandemic, represents a worst-case scenario for pandemic planning and preparedness. Communities, individuals, employers, schools, and other organizations are asked to prepare and plan for the use of interventions that will help limit the spread of disease. Pandemic concerns have escalated due to the more recent impacts of disease outbreaks such as the SARS coronavirus (SARS-CoV) in 2002, pandemic H1N1 in 2009, MERS coronavirus (MERS-CoV) in 2012, and novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in 2019. Future disease outbreaks are likely, but difficult for scientists to predict.

General Precautions
Observe general precautions, including handwashing.

If one of your family or household members becomes ill, they should be isolated in a separate room. If several members are sick, they can be isolated in the same room. When caring for those who are ill, you will need some appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), including the following:

- Disposable vinyl, nitrile, or latex gloves or other reusable gloves that can be disinfected
- At least the minimum level of respiratory protection, which is a surgical mask or preferably an N95 respirator

The items must be removed in the proper sequence to avoid contaminating yourself (see “Pandemic Planning —Health Care Worker Preparedness” fact sheet for more details)

Disinfection
Cups, glasses, dishes, all eating utensils, thermometers, and so on must be disinfected after use by the ill person. The eating utensils can be disinfected by use of either a dishwasher or dishwater with 1.5 tsp. of household bleach to one gallon (3.8 liters) of water. Remember that handling these items while they are still contaminated will lead to possible infection. Therefore, wear gloves while handling potentially contaminated items.

Surfaces in the room of the infected persons should be cleaned with a solution of bleach water as noted above or with Lysol® or Clorox® spray, wipes, or liquid. Pay attention to faucets, doorknobs, telephones, and refrigerator, oven, and toilet flush handles. This should be done whenever there is contact by an infected person or otherwise 2–3 times a day. Linens and clothing need to be washed in warm water with detergent and preferably dried in a dryer.

Remember, if you are not careful in your personal protective wear and hygiene measures, you may carry infected material on your skin or clothing, which may contaminate others or yourself. Designate a specific garbage bag for infected, disposable materials.

Isolation
If you develop flu-like symptoms, stay home and isolated from your household except to seek medical care. Remain at home until at least 24 hours after you are free of fever (100°F [37.8°C] or greater) or signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medications. Seek medical care if you have signs of pneumonia or severe lung infection (difficulty breathing, wheezing, or a persistent fever over 102°F or 38.9°C).

If there are other cases of infectious disease in your neighborhood, it would be safest to keep your children in your yard or home away from others who may be infected. Plan in advance what will need to be done or who you can call upon if you are alone, ill, and incapacitated or if the adults in the household become ill and incapacitated. Talk with family members and loved ones about how they would be cared for if they got sick or what will be needed to care for them in your home.

Schools and day-care facilities will likely close. Plan your childcare in advance and how you might function by working at home, for example, or how college-age family members can assist in younger childcare during the time their colleges and universities are closed. Having multiple younger children from several households in one home for day care is less than optimal because of the high risk of spreading the disease.
Limit your exposure to public places, which may include grocery shopping only once a week rather than every few days. In addition to the recommended food and water storage items, keep a supply of your prescription medications, nonprescription drugs, and other health supplies on hand, including pain relievers, stomach remedies, cough and cold medicines, fluids with electrolytes, vitamins, rubbing alcohol, thermometers, garbage bags, and cleaning supplies. Keep your car filled with gas, and have cash on hand in case banks are closed or services limited. Use over-the-counter medications as directed on the container.

Maintain social distancing (see “Pandemic Planning—Social Distancing” fact sheet for more details) and stay at least 6 feet away from others at all times, particularly in public. Avoid handshaking and other forms of contact. Use proper cough and sneeze etiquette even if you are not ill (see “Pandemic Planning—Personal Hygiene” fact sheet for more details). Be sure to teach your children the proper handwashing and cough/sneeze behaviors as well. If you are ill, you need to be isolated from those who are healthy, even in your own household.

REFERENCES
www.cdc.gov Interim pre-pandemic planning guidance, including individual planning, workplace planning, community planning, school planning, health-care planning, community strategy for pandemic influenza mitigation.
www.epa.gov Groundwater and drinking water: emergency disinfection of drinking water.
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Basic Self Reliance (1989), 76.