How to make your own Vial of Life

You can assemble your own Vial of Life with items in your home. Since the Vial of Life is a concept not a product, you can put together the ingredients to help speak for you, when you are not able to speak for yourself.

You will need to make a small sign, approximately 3 inches by 5 inches, with bold letters reading “Vial of Life”. This can be done in eye catching colors. Place this by your entrance of your home; the concept is that it is visible to someone coming to your home and it identifies you as a Vial participant.

You will need an empty prescription vial or small jar. On this item, affix a handwritten or typed label reading “Vial of Life”. Put your medical information on a piece of paper and place it in this jar or vial. If you use a computer, use an updateable database in case this information changes. Or make multiple copies that you can change the information on later.

Include information such as name, insurance, medical problems, medications and friends or family to contact in an emergency. You can include additional information that you would like emergency personnel to be aware of in the instance you cannot speak for yourself. All health information is helpful.

Place the Vial in your refrigerator in the open or taped to the inside so that emergency personnel can readily see it and obtain it. Time is an element in an emergency, and emergency personnel need information as soon as possible. Consider this when placing the vial in the refrigerator. The vial needs to be visible when opening the door.

Put a small typed or written sign on your refrigerator that also says “Vial of Life”. This will tell rescue/emergency personnel you have medical information in your refrigerator. If you take your Vial out of the refrigerator for maintenance or if you move, take the signs off of your home and off of your refrigerator as well.

As you can see, you can communicate with emergency personnel in this fashion. You may also put this information on the front of your refrigerator. The Vial of Life is a standardized system to communicate with Emergency Personnel. Any information you can provide the Emergency Personnel in your area to help treat or diagnose you is helpful.

Encourage your friends and your family to participate in this program if they live in the service area of Alameda County Fire Department. If you live in another city or area other than Alameda County, print out the information on the vial and share it with your local agencies. Agencies other than Alameda County Fire Department may not be aware of the program and their personnel may not know what “Vial of Life” means.

Please call Alameda County Fire Department Public Education for additional information if needed. 510-667-3148.