

Food and Water in an Emergency



If a disaster strikes your community, you might not have access to food, water and electricity for days, or even weeks. By taking some time now to store emergency food and water supplies, you can provide for your entire family.

Having an ample supply of clean water is a top priority in an emergency. A normally active person needs to drink at least two quarts of water each day. Hot environments can double that amount. Children, nursing mothers and ill people will need even more. You will also need water for food preparation and hygiene. Store a total of at least one gallon per person, per day. You should store at least a two-week supply of water for each member of your family.

WATER SUPPLIES

If supplies run low, never ration water. Drink the amount you need today, and try to find more for tomorrow. You can minimize the amount of water your body needs by reducing activity and staying cool.

How to Store Water...

- Store your water in thoroughly washed plastic, glass, fiberglass or enamel-lined metal containers. Never use a container that has held toxic substances. Plastic containers, such as soft drink bottles, are best. You can also purchase food-grade plastic buckets or drums.
- Seal water containers tightly, label them and store in a cool, dark place. Rotate water every six months.

Emergency Outdoor Water Sources...

If you need to find water outside your home, you can use these sources. Be sure to treat the water according to the instructions on the following page before drinking it.

- Rainwater
- Streams, rivers and other moving bodies of water
- Ponds and lakes
- Natural springs

Avoid water with floating material, an odor or dark color. You should not drink flood water.

Hidden Water Sources in Your Home...

- If a disaster catches you without a stored supply of clean water, you can use the water in your hot-water tank, pipes and ice cubes. As a last resort, you can use water in the reservoir tank of your toilet (not the bowl).
- Do you know the location of your incoming water valve? You'll need to shut it off to stop contaminated water from entering your home if you hear reports of broken water or sewage lines.
- To use the water in your pipes, let air into the plumbing by turning on the faucet in your house at the highest level. A small amount of water will trickle out. Then obtain water from the lowest faucet in the house.
- To use the water in your hot-water tank, be sure the electricity or gas is off, and open the drain at the bottom of the tank. Start the water flowing by turning off the water intake valve and turning on a hot-water faucet. Do not turn on the gas or electricity when the tank is empty.



FOOD SUPPLIES

When Food Supplies Are Low...

- If activity is reduced, healthy people can survive on half their usual food intake for an extended period and without any food for many days. Food, unlike water, may be rationed safely, except for children and pregnant women.
- If your water supply is limited, try to avoid foods that are high in fat and protein, and don't stock salty foods, since they will make you thirsty. Try to eat salt-free crackers, whole grain cereals and canned foods with high liquid content.
- You don't need to go out and buy unfamiliar foods to prepare an emergency food supply. You can use the canned foods, dry mixes and other staples on your cupboard shelves. In fact, familiar foods are important.
- They can lift morale and give a feeling of security in time of stress. Also, canned foods won't require cooking, water or special preparation. Following are recommended short-term food storage plans.



Special Considerations...

- As you stock food, take into account your family's unique needs and tastes. Try to include foods that they will enjoy and that are also high in calories and nutrition. Foods that require no refrigeration, preparation or cooking are best.
- Individuals with special diets and allergies will need particular attention, as will babies, toddlers and elderly people. Nursing mothers may need liquid formula, in case they are unable to nurse. Canned dietetic foods, juices and soups may be helpful for ill or elderly people.
- Make sure you have a manual can opener and disposable utensils. And don't forget nonperishable foods for your pets.

How to Cook If the Power Goes Out...

- For emergency cooking you can use a fireplace, or a charcoal grill or camp stove can be used outdoors.
- You can also heat food with candle warmers, chafing dishes and fondue pots. Canned food can be eaten right out of the can. If you heat it in the can, be sure to open the can and remove the label first.

Short-Term Food Supplies...

- Even though it is unlikely that an emergency would cut off your food supply for two weeks, you should prepare a supply that will last that long.
- The easiest way to develop a two-week stockpile is to increase the amount of basic foods you normally keep on your shelves.

Storage Tips...

- Keep food in a dry, cool spot - a dark area if possible.
- Keep food covered at all times.
- Open food boxes or cans care-fully so that you can close them tightly after each use.
- Wrap cookies and crackers in plastic bags, and keep them in tight containers.
- Empty opened packages of sugar, dried fruits and nuts into screw-top jars or air-tight cans to protect them from pests.
- Inspect all food for signs of spoilage before use.
- Use foods before they go bad, and replace them with fresh supplies, dated with ink or marker.
- Place new items at the back of the storage area and older ones in front.

Nutrition Tips...

- During and right after a disaster, it will be vital that you maintain your strength. So remember:
- Eat at least one well-balanced meal each day.
- Drink enough liquid to enable your body to function properly (two quarts a day).
- Take in enough calories to enable you to do any necessary work.
- Include vitamin, mineral and protein supplements in your stockpile to assure adequate nutrition.

Shelf-life of Foods for Storage...

Here are some general guidelines for rotating common emergency foods.

Use within six months:

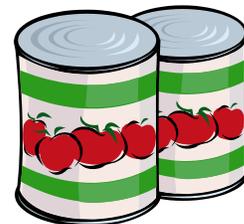
- Powdered milk (boxed)
- Dried fruit (in metal container)
- Dry, crisp crackers (in metal container)
- Potatoes

Use within one year:

- Canned condensed meat and vegetable soups
- Canned fruits, fruit juices and vegetables
- Ready-to-eat cereals and uncooked instant cereals (in metal containers)
- Peanut butter
- Jelly
- Hard candy and canned nuts
- Vitamin C

May be stored indefinitely (in proper containers and conditions):

- Wheat
- Vegetable oils
- Dried corn
- Baking powder
- Soybeans
- Instant coffee, tea and cocoa
- Salt
- Noncarbonated soft drinks
- White rice
- Bouillon products
- Dry pasta
- Powdered milk (in nitrogen-packed cans)



If the Electricity Goes Off . . .

FIRST, use perishable food and foods from the refrigerator.

THEN, use the foods from the freezer. To minimize the number of times you open the freezer door, post a list of freezer contents on it. In a well-filled, well-insulated freezer, foods will usually still have ice crystals in their centers (meaning foods are safe to eat) for at least three days.

FINALLY, begin to use non-perishable foods and staples.



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