

Emergency Water and Food Supplies

If a natural or human-caused disaster strikes your community, you might not have access to food, water and electricity for a while. By taking steps now to store emergency food and water supplies, along with a disaster supplies kit, you can help minimize the affect of any such disaster on your family.



- How and where to store water
- Alternate emergency water sources
- How and where to store food supplies
- For more information...

Water Supplies

In an emergency, having a supply of clean water is a top priority, for drinking, food preparation and hygiene.

- Store at least one gallon per person and pet per day.
- Store at least a three-day supply of water for each member of your family.

In an emergency, drink at least two quarts of water a day, 3-4 quarts a day if you are in a hot climate, pregnant, sick or a child. If supplies run low, never ration water. Drink the amount you need today and look for more tomorrow.

How and Where to Store Water

- In a cool, dark place in your home, each vehicle and your workplace.
- Preferably, in store-bought, factory-sealed water containers.
- Alternately, in food-grade quality containers made for storing water and available from sporting goods and surplus stores and other retailers. These containers must be thoroughly washed, sanitized and rinsed, and the water you store in them, if it's from your tap, may need to be treated before being stored. Ask your public health service or water provider for information on whether and how to treat the water. Follow those instructions before storing any.

Avoid using

- Store-bought water past the expiration or "use by" date on the container.
- Containers that can't be sealed tightly.
- Containers that can break, such as glass bottles.
- Containers that have ever held any toxic substance.
- Plastic milk bottles and cartons. They are difficult to clean and break down over time.



Do

- Change stored water every six months.

Alternate Emergency Water Sources Inside and Outside Your Home

Inside

If a disaster catches you without a stored supply of clean water, you can use the water in—

- your hot-water tank.
- pipes and faucets.
- ice cubes.

To use the water in your hot-water tank, be sure the electricity or gas is off, then open the drain at the bottom of the tank. Start the water flowing by turning off the water intake valve at the tank and turning on a hot-water faucet. Refill the tank before turning the gas or electricity back on. If the gas is turned off, only a professional can turn it back on.

To use the water in your pipes, identify and turn on the highest faucet in your home to let air into the plumbing. You then can get water from the lowest faucet.

Outside

If you need to find water outside your home, try—

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

Take steps to make water from any of these sources safer before drinking it. You should not drink flood water. Avoid water with floating material, an odor or dark color. Use saltwater only if you distill it first.

Food Supplies

During and after a disaster, it will be vital that you and your household (including your pets) eat enough to maintain your strength.

- Store foods that you eat regularly. Foods that require no refrigeration, preparation or cooking are best. Include vitamin, mineral and protein supplements to ensure adequate nutrition.



- Store enough food for two weeks. It is better to have extra you can share than to run out.
- Individuals with special diets and allergies will need particular attention, as will babies, toddlers, ill 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.

During and after a disaster, eat at least one well-balanced meal each day, more if you are working hard. 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.

For emergency cooking, you can use a fireplace or a charcoal grill or camp stove outdoors. Use only approved devices—like candle warmers, chafing dishes and fondue pots—for warming food. If you heat food in its can, be sure to open it and remove the label before heating. Never leave open flames unattended.

How and Where to Store Food

- Keep food in a dry, cool spot—out of the sun, if possible.
- Wrap perishable foods, such as cookies and crackers, in plastic bags and keep them in sealed containers.
- Empty opened packages of sugar, dried fruits and nuts into screw-top jars or airtight cans to keep them fresh and unspoiled.

Avoid

- Canned goods that have become swollen, dented or corroded.
- Fatty, high-protein or salty foods when your water supply is low.

Do

- Keep your hands clean — it's one of the best ways to keep from getting sick. If soap and running water are not available, use alcohol-based hand gels or wipes to clean hands.
- Inspect all food for signs of spoilage before use. Throw out perishable foods, such as meat and poultry, that have been left out at room temperature for more than 2 hours.
- Replace your stored food on a regular basis with fresh supplies, dated on the container.
- Eat salt-free crackers, whole grain cereals and canned foods with high liquid content if your water supplies are low.
- If there's a power outage, eat food in the refrigerator first, the freezer next and lastly from your stored supplies. 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 two days.

For more information, contact any of the following:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.bt.cdc.gov)
- Your local American Red Cross chapter (www.redcross.org)
- State and local health departments (www.cdc.gov/doc.do/id/0900f3ec80226c7a)
- Local emergency management agency
- CDC Public Response Hotline (English 1-888-246-2675, Spanish 1-888-246-2857, TTY 1-866-874-2646)

***having a supply of clean water**

Learn where the water intake valve to your home is. If you hear reports of broken water or sewage lines, or if local officials recommend doing so, you would need to shut off water to your house at the incoming water valve to stop contaminated water from entering your home.

***Washed, sanitized, rinsed**

(1) **Wash** containers with dishwashing soap and rinse with water, (2) **sanitize** by swishing a solution of 1 teaspoon of liquid household chlorine bleach to a quart of water on all interior surfaces of the container and (3) **rinse** thoroughly with clean water before use.

***Replace your stored food on a regular basis**

The Recommended Shelf Life of Foods in Storage

Within six months, use—

- Boxed potatoes.
- Dried fruit.
- Dry, crisp crackers.
- Powdered milk.

Within one year, use—

- Canned, condensed meat and vegetable soups.
- Canned fruits, fruit juices and vegetables.
- Hard candy and canned nuts.
- Jelly.

- Peanut butter.
- Ready-to-eat cereals and uncooked instant cereals.
- Vitamins.

In proper containers and conditions, the following can be stored indefinitely:

- Baking powder
- Bouillon products
- Dried corn
- Dry pasta
- Instant coffee, tea and cocoa
- Soft drinks
- Vegetable oils
- Salt
- Soybeans
- Wheat (for breadmaking)
- White rice

Ways to Make Outdoor Water Safer*

** These instructions are not for treating water to be stored, only for emergencies when no other water is available.*

Untreated water can make you very sick. Besides having a bad odor and taste, it can contain toxic chemicals, heavy metals and germs that cause such diseases as dysentery, typhoid and hepatitis. Before drinking outdoor water, using it in food preparation or for hygiene, make it safer to use by—

- **Straining it.** Pour the water through paper towels, a clean cloth or a coffee filter to remove any suspended particles.
- **Boiling it.** In a large pot or kettle, bring water to a rolling boil for 1 full minute. Cool it and pour it back and forth between two clean containers to improve its taste before drinking it.
- **Chlorinating it.** Using household liquid bleach that contains 5.25 to 6.0 percent sodium hypochlorite (listed on the label) as its only active ingredient, add 16 drops (1/8 teaspoon) per gallon to water in a large pot or kettle. Stir and let stand for 30 minutes. If the water does not have a slight bleach odor, repeat the dosage and let stand another 15 minutes. If it still does not smell of chlorine, find another source of water and start over.
- **Distilling it.** Fill a pot halfway with water. Tie a cup to the handle on the pot's lid so that the cup will hang right-side-up inside the pot when the lid is upside-down without dangling into the water. Boil the water for 20 minutes. The water that drips from the lid into the cup is distilled.

None of these methods is perfect. The best solution is to use all of them. Boiling and chlorination will kill most microbes but will not remove other contaminants, such as heavy metals, salts and most other chemicals. Distillation will kill or remove most of any remaining contaminants.