

Safe Food and Water

You should have a 2-week supply of food and water in your home for use in an emergency situation in which you are cut off from normal supply routes. The easiest way to develop a 2-week stockpile is to increase the amount of basic foods you normally keep on your shelves. Check expiration dates frequently and follow the practice of first-in, first-out.

Pack at least a 3- 7 day supply of nonperishable food and water in your Disaster Supplies Kit to be used in case you need to evacuate or you cannot safely enter your home. You need to have these items packed and ready in case there is no time to gather food from the kitchen when disaster strikes. Include both compact, lightweight items like dehydrated foods, which are easy to carry, and canned foods like fruit, juices, and vegetable that supply a source of water. Choose foods that require no refrigeration, preparation or cooking. If you must heat food, pack a can of cooking fuel, but do not pack gasoline, kerosene or propane.

Familiar foods can lift morale and help people feel secure in time of stress. Try to include foods that everyone will enjoy. Look for foods high in calories, protein, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals. Use canned foods with high liquid content in case water is scarce.

Specifically, consider packing:

- Read-to-eat canned meats, fruits and vegetables
- Canned juice, milk and soup
- High-energy foods, such as peanut butter, jelly, salt-free crackers and energy bars
- Trail mix
- Comfort foods, such as hard candy, sweetened cereals and candy bars
- Instant coffee and tea
- Compressed food bars

- Dried foods, such as raisins
- Freeze-dried foods
- Whole-grain cereals
- Instant meals, such as cup of noodles
- Snack-sized canned goods, which generally have pull-top lids
- Prepackaged beverages, such as those in foil packets or boxes
- Foods for infants, elderly persons or persons with special diets
- Nonperishable foods for pets and other animals

Keep in mind the following:

- Salty foods are usually not a good choice because they will cause thirst and your water supply may be limited
- If your water supply is limited, you should avoid eating foods that are high in fat and protein, because they require more water for the body to metabolize
- Commercially dehydrated foods often require a lot of water for reconstitution and effort to prepare
- Food packaged in glass bottles and jars is usually heavy and bulky, and the glass can easily break
- Meal-sized canned foods are usually heavy and bulky, but they can be useful because they contain water
- Whole grains, beans and dried pasta require water and cooking time for preparation

If your electricity goes off and you lose refrigeration:

- First, use perishable food from the refrigerator
- Then, use the food 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 two days.
- Finally, begin to use nonperishable foods and staples
- Consider getting a back-up generator

Storing Water

Having an ample supply of clean water is a top priority in an emergency. The following guidelines will help you ensure that members of your household have sufficient water in an emergency situation:

- Keep at least a 3-7 day supply of water, that is, a minimum of 3-7 gallons per person. More is better.
- Each person should have ½ gallon per day for drinking and ½ gallon for cooking and sanitation.
- A normally active person needs to drink at least ½ gallon of water each day. Hot environments and intense physical activity can double that amount. Children, nursing mothers and ill people will also need more.
- Be sure to include drinking and clean-up water for your pets. The amount needed will depend on their sizes and the conditions.
- Pets often drink more water than usual when under stress.
- To prepare the safest and most reliable emergency supply of water, purchase commercially bottled water.
- Keep bottled water in its original container and do not open it until you need to use it.

If you are preparing your own containers of water, follow the directions below for selecting, cleaning and filling the containers with water:

- Chose two-liter, plastic soda bottles – not plastic jugs or cardboard containers that have had milk or fruit juice in them.
- Do not use glass containers because they can break and are heavy.
- Thoroughly clean your plastic bottles with dishwashing soap and water; rinse them completely.
- Sanitize them and their caps by adding a solution of 1 teaspoon of non-scented liquid household chlorine bleach to a quart of water. Swish the sanitizing solution in the containers and caps so that it touches all interior surfaces. After sanitizing the containers and caps, thoroughly rinse out the sanitizing solution with clean water.
- Fill the containers to the top with regular tap water. If the tap water has been commercially treated from a water utility with chlorine, you do not need to add anything else to the water to keep it clean. If the water you are using comes from a well or water source that is not treated with chlorine, add two drops of non-scented liquid household chlorine bleach to the water.
- Tightly close the containers using the original caps. Be careful not to contaminate the caps by touching the inside of them with fingers.

Place a date on the outside of the containers so that you know when you filled them or when you bought them. Store them in a cool, dark place. Replace the water every six months if not using commercially bottled water. Store your 3-day supply in a handy place. You need to have water packed and ready in case there is no time to fill water bottles when disaster strikes.