

# Be Prepared for Emergencies

## Creating a 3-day Food/Water Supply

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Food storage is part of being prepared for emergencies and natural disasters. Individuals and families can eliminate some stress, worry and inconveniences by planning for emergency food needs. How much and which foods to store will depend on the members of your household, your preferences, special health conditions, ability to use the food in an emergency, and space for storage. Planning for short-term emergency food needs may be as simple as increasing quantities of some staple foods and non-perishable foods that you normally would use.

A three day emergency preparedness kit will be useful for most situations. Gathering the essential items that could be needed and putting them in one location will help you and your household through the worst days of an emergency. Tips include:

- Keep canned foods in a dry place where the temperature is cool.
- Store boxed food in tightly closed plastic or metal containers to protect from pests and to extend its shelf life.
- Throw out any canned good that becomes swollen, dented, or corroded.
- Use foods before they go bad, and replace them with fresh supplies.
- Place new items at the back of the storage area and older ones in the front.
- Change stored food and water supplies every six months. Be sure to write the date you store it on all containers.
- Re-think your needs every year and update your kit as your family needs change.
- Keep items in airtight plastic bags and put your entire disaster supplies kit in one or two easy-to-carry containers, such as an unused trashcan, camping backpack, or duffel bag.

The food supply needs to be non-perishable; select foods that require no refrigeration, minimal or no preparation or cooking, and little or no water. If you must heat food, pack a can of sterno. Select food items that are compact and lightweight. Tips include:

- Ready-to-eat canned meats, fruits and vegetables
- Canned juices, milk, soup (if powdered, store extra water)
- Staples -- sugar, salt, pepper, condiments, spices
- High energy foods: peanut butter, jelly, crackers, granola bars, trail mix



- Foods for infants, elderly persons or persons on special diets (for example, diabetics or those with allergies)
- Comfort/stress foods -- cookies, hard candy, sweetened cereals, lollipops, instant coffee, tea bags
- Supplements -- Vitamin/minerals, calcium, fish oil

Make sure you have a can opener, scissors or knife for cutting open foil and plastic pouches, and disposable plates, cups and utensils. Pack all these items in plastic bags (zipper closures work well) to keep them dry and as airtight as possible. Keep a list of dates when food items need to be inspected and possibly rotated (used and then replaced with newly purchased items).

Water is also a crucial part of this three-day supply. The following is the latest recommendations:

- To prepare safest and most reliable emergency supply of water, it is recommended you purchase commercially bottled water. Keep bottled water in its original container and do not open it until you need to use it.
- If you choose to use your own storage containers, choose two-liter plastic soft drink bottles. Thoroughly clean the bottles with dishwashing soap and water, and rinse completely so there is no residual soap. Sanitize the bottles 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 bottle so that it touches all surfaces. After sanitizing the bottle, thoroughly rinse out the sanitizing solution with clean water. Fill the bottle 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 container using the original cap. Be careful not to contaminate the cap by touching the inside of it with your finger. Place a date on the outside of the container so that you know when you filled it. Store in a cool, dark place. Replace the water every six months if not using commercially bottled water.
- **Do not use** plastic jugs or cardboard containers that have had milk or fruit juice in them. Milk protein and fruit sugars cannot be adequately removed from these containers and provide an environment for bacterial growth when water is stored in them. Cardboard containers also leak easily and are not designed for long-term storage of liquids. Also, do not use glass containers, because they can break and are heavy.
- Store one gallon of water per person per day. A normally active person needs to drink at least two quarts of water each day. Hot environments and intense physical activity can double that amount. Children, nursing mothers, and ill people will need more.

For more information see:

<http://missourifamilies.org/features/copingarticles/coping15.htm>