

Department of Family and Consumer Sciences

BE PREPARED: FOOD AND WATER IN AN EMERGENCY

IN CASE OF AN INFECTIOUS DISEASE OUTBREAK

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The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to an infectious disease. If you do become ill, stay home while you are sick. In the event that you may not be able to leave your home to obtain food and water or there is a problem finding food, the best way to prepare is to assemble a 14-day food and water emergency kit.

You will need:

- A minimum of 1 gallon of water per person per day
- enough food for 14 days

Food

Food emergency kits frequently are prepared in the case of natural disasters when you may not have power. For this reason, foods and beverages need to be nonperishable.

When you cannot obtain food and water because of an illness, perishable foods also will work. Just be sure that you purchase foods that have long shelf life, or you will be replacing them often.

When you are sick, eating the right foods is more important than ever. Fruits and vegetables are good for your immune system to help you fight infections. Examples of

fruits and vegetables that stay fresh for several days or weeks include:

- Apples
- Citrus fruits
- Onions
- Potatoes
- Winter squash
- Garlic
- Carrots
- Beets
- Cabbage

Pre-prepared greens in sealed packages will last longer than heads or bunches of leafy greens. Eggs will stay fresh for several weeks after the sell-by date. Foods frozen at 40 F or below will remain safe indefinitely but lose quality over time.

The following foods are suggested when selecting emergency food supplies and will be useful for many kinds of emergencies including times when you lose power:

- Ready-to-eat canned meats, fruits, vegetables and a can opener
- Protein or fruit bars
- Dry cereal or granola
- Peanut butter
- Dried fruit

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- Canned juices
- Crackers
- Non-perishable pasteurized milk
- High-energy foods such as nuts and trail mix
- Infant formula and infant foods
- Comfort/stress foods

Try to reduce your intake of salt should you need to use your emergency food and water kit. Canned vegetables, meat, and comfort foods such as chips and crackers can be high in salt. This can increase your thirst and need for more water. Choose lower sodium or no-salt varieties so that you do not require extra water. Also consider stocking foods with a high water content such as soups and juices.

Water

A normally active person needs to drink at least 2 quarts (half-gallon) of water each day. People in hot environments, children, nursing mothers and ill people will require even more.

You will also need water for food preparation and hygiene. Store at least 1 gallon per person, per day. If supplies run low, never ration water. Food, unlike water, may be rationed safely, except for children and pregnant women. Instead, reduce your level of activity and try to stay cool. 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.

The safest and most reliable way to store water is to buy commercially bottled water. Keep bottled water in its original container, and do not open it until needed. If you do not have enough water saved, safe water sources in your home include the water in your hot-water tank, pipes and ice cubes. You should not use water from toilet flush tanks or bowls, radiators, waterbeds, or swimming pools/spas.

If You Are Preparing Your Own Containers of Water ...

Purchase food-grade water storage containers from surplus or camping supplies stores to use for water storage. If you decide to re-use storage containers, choose 2-liter plastic soft drink bottles — not plastic jugs or cardboard containers that have had milk or fruit juice in them. It is difficult to clean these containers well enough to prevent the growth of bacteria. Cardboard containers leak easily and are not designed for long-term storage of liquids.

More Information

Federal Emergency Management and American Red Cross, redcross.org

Extension Disaster Education Network, eden.lsu.edu under the Resource Catalog

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