

ARE YOU READY?

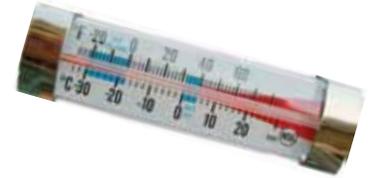


**Get
Ready**

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Keeping food and water safe in an emergency

In the wake of many disasters – especially those that leave residents without power – access to safe food and water can be in short supply. But by planning ahead and learning a few safety tips, you and your loved ones can stay free of foodborne and waterborne illnesses.



Plan ahead



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Food and water are essential parts of any emergency stockpile kit. Your kit should include a three-day supply of clean water – at least one gallon per person in your household per day – as well as a three-day supply of nonperishable food for each person. Don't forget a manual can opener, disposable utensils and napkins. Store your stockpiled food in a cool, dry area and, if your home is at risk of flooding, in a high location.

When grocery shopping for your stockpile, consider any special dietary needs and try to avoid very salty foods that make people thirsty. Good foods to consider include canned meat, fruit and vegetables, soups, snack bars, crackers and nuts. Pick foods high in nutrients. Also, think about including some fun, comfort foods – eating familiar foods can help raise people's spirits, especially in a prolonged emergency.

If needed, don't forget to include pet food and ready-to-use baby formula. It's also a good idea to include a food thermometer so you can check the temperature of perishable foods. Be sure to check your stockpile regularly and switch out expired foods.

Food safety

In case of a prolonged emergency, especially if you're left without power, follow these tips to avoid foodborne illness:

- ◆ Dispose of any food that may have been contaminated with floodwaters.
- ◆ Dispose of wooden cutting boards, bottle nipples and pacifiers if they've been contaminated with floodwater, as they're difficult to properly clean.



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- ◆ Dispose of canned foods that are bulging, opened or damaged.
- ◆ Dispose of perishable foods such as meat and eggs that have been stored in temperatures above 40 degrees for more than two hours. Foods at 40 degrees or below can be refrozen or cooked. It's a good idea to buy both a freezer and refrigerator thermometer now, so you can quickly check the temperature.
- ◆ If you've lost power, try to open and close the refrigerator as little as possible. If you can, add bags of ice to the refrigerator to keep things cool.



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Water safety



Photo courtesy iStockphoto-Cris Hughes

A number of disasters can contaminate drinking water supplies. In addition to stockpiling enough drinking water for members of your household, it's a good idea to purchase extra bottled water to use for cooking, cleaning and hygiene.

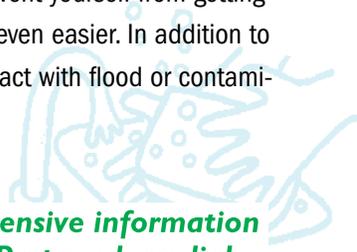
If there is any chance that your tap water has been contaminated during a disaster, don't use it. Listen to updates from emergency officials on the state of your community's water supply and for instructions to boil tap water before use (to stay abreast of such updates, make sure your stockpile includes a battery-operated radio). Do not attempt to drink water you believe has been contaminated with fuel or toxic chemicals, as boiling and other disinfectants will not work to purify it.

If you don't have bottled water, boiling water is the best way to purify your drinking supplies and kill disease-carrying bacteria, viruses and parasites. If the water is cloudy, first filter it through a clean paper towel, cloth or a coffee filter before boiling. Bring your water to a boil and allow it to boil for at least one minute. Store your boiled water in clean containers with tight lids.

If boiling your water is not an option, you can also use unscented household chlorine bleach, iodine or chlorine dioxide tablets. Keep in mind that while such methods are effective at killing harmful bacteria and viruses, only chlorine dioxide tablets and boiling will kill disease-carrying parasites. To purify your water using unscented household chlorine bleach, add one-eighth of a teaspoon for every gallon of clear water and one-fourth of a teaspoon for every gallon of cloudy water. Stir the water and let it sit for 30 minutes before using it. To use iodine or chlorine dioxide tablets, follow the manufacturer's instructions.

Wash your hands!

Try your best to continue good hand-washing practices in the wake of disaster – it's one of the best ways to prevent yourself from getting sick. Consider including pocket-sized bottles of hand sanitizer in your emergency stockpile kit to make the task even easier. In addition to the usual hand-washing times, such as before eating and preparing food, wash your hands after coming in contact with flood or contaminated waters as well as spoiled foods.



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See our website for extensive information under the Emergency Preparedness link.



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