



CALHOUN COUNTY

## Public Health Department

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190 E Michigan Ave  
Battle Creek, MI 49014

[calhouncountymi.gov/publichealth](http://calhouncountymi.gov/publichealth)  
269-969-6370

### Fact Sheet

## Emergency Food and Water

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Following a disaster, some people may not have access to food and water for days and perhaps even weeks. Taking steps to prepare and maintain a food and water emergency kit can prevent a difficult situation from becoming a life-threatening one.

### Emergency Foods

#### Things to Think About

- What foods are nonperishable and do not need cooking and refrigeration?
- What foods are easily prepared?
- What foods are calorie and protein-rich and help build energy?
- What foods appeal to family members?
- What foods are needed to meet the special dietary needs of those such as babies, toddlers, diabetics, and elderly people?

#### Food Options to Consider

- Compressed food bars: They store well, are lightweight, taste good, are nutritious, and are high in calories.
- Trail mix: Blends of granola, nuts, seeds, and dried fruits are available prepackaged, or assemble your own.
- Dried foods: Dried foods are nutritious and satisfying, but they have salt content, which promotes thirst.
- Freeze-dried foods: Freeze-dried foods are tasty and lightweight but need water for reconstitution. Always use the required amount of water.
- Instant meals: Instant meals such as cups of noodles or cups of soup are also a good addition to kits, but they too need water for reconstitution.

- Snack-sized canned goods: Snack-sized canned goods are good because they generally have pull-top lids or twist-open keys.
- Prepackaged beverages: Beverages packaged in foil packets and foil-lined boxes are suitable for disaster supplies kits because they are tightly sealed and will keep for a long time.

### **Food Options to Avoid**

- Commercially dehydrated foods: Commercially dehydrated foods require a great deal of water for reconstitution and require extra effort in preparation. They also are inedible unless they are reconstituted.
- Bottled foods: Bottled foods are too heavy, bulky, and break easily.
- Meal-sized canned foods: Meal-sized commercially canned foods are bulky and heavy.
- Whole grains, beans, and pasta: Preparations of these foods could be complicated under the circumstance of a disaster.

### **Purchasing Foods**

Most of the foods appropriate for a Disaster Supplies Kit are available at local supermarkets. Specialty food stores such as health food stores or food storage supply houses as well as sporting goods stores may have foods prepared especially for this purpose.

### **Food Storage Tips**

- Keep food in the driest and coolest spot in the house - a dark area if possible.
- Keep food covered at all times.
- Seal cookies and crackers in plastic bags and keep them in tight containers.
- Open food boxes and cans carefully so that they can be closed tightly after each use.
- Store packages susceptible to pests, e.g., opened packages of sugar, dried fruits, and nuts in screw-top jars or airtight cans.
- Store wheat, corn, and beans in sealed cans or sealed plastic buckets.
- Buy powdered milk in nitrogen-packed cans for long-term storage.
- Keep salt and vitamins in their original packages.
- Inspect all items periodically to make sure there are no broken seals or dented containers.

## **Emergency Cooking**

In an emergency, food can be cooked using a fireplace, a charcoal grill, or a camp stove. These cooking options should be prepared **outdoors only**. Food can also be heated with candle warmers, chafing dishes, and fondue pots. Canned foods can be heated and eaten directly out of the can. Completely remove the lid and label before heating the can to prevent internal combustion or the label from catching fire.

## **Emergency Water**

### **3-Day Water Supply**

Store a 3-day supply of water for each family member. The needs of each person will differ depending upon age, physical condition, activity, diet, and climate. A normally active person needs to drink at least two quarts of water daily. Children, nursing mothers, and ill people need more.

Additional water is necessary for food preparation and hygiene. At least two gallons per person per day should be stored.

Store water in clean, sanitary containers. Plastic containers are good because they are lightweight and unbreakable. Glass containers are non-permeable, but they are breakable and heavy. Metal containers should be considered as a last resort because they may corrode and tend to give water an unpleasant taste.

### **Purifying Contaminated Water**

In addition to having a bad odor and taste, contaminated water contains micro-organisms that cause diseases such as dysentery, cholera, typhoid, and hepatitis. All water of uncertain purity should be purified prior to use. Your emergency food and water supply should include a liquid chlorine bleach that contains 5.25% sodium hypochlorite and no soap or fragrances.

### **Simple Disinfection Methods for Water Consumption**

- Boil water vigorously for 10 minutes prior to using. To improve taste, pour from one clean container to another several times.
- Common Unscented Household Bleach (5.25% sodium hypochlorite-stated on the container): Use 2 teaspoons of bleach to 1 gallon of water. Shake to mix and allow setting for 30 minutes prior to using. If the water

appears cloudy, increase the amount of bleach to 4 teaspoons per gallon of water.

*\*Use clean, sanitized containers for holding water that has been treated.*

## **General Tips**

- The kit should be assembled based on the goal of providing each family member with at least one well-balanced meal per day.
- The food supplies should be rotated every six months to keep them fresh.
- A non-electric can opener and disposable utensils are essential additions to the kit.
- Include only dry food for pets.
- Provide enough calories to retain the strength to work.
- Include vitamins, minerals, and protein supplements in your stockpile to ensure adequate nutrition.
- By reducing activity and staying cool, the amount of water a body requires can be minimized.

## **How do I get more information on emergency food and water planning?**

Calhoun County Public Health Department

Phone: 269-969-6383

 [www.facebook.com/CCPublicHealthDepartment/](https://www.facebook.com/CCPublicHealthDepartment/)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Phone: 800-232-4636 (800-CDC-INFO)

Website: <https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/index.html>

Spanish: <https://www.cdc.gov/es/disasters/index.html>

Do I Thing

Website: <https://www.dolthing.com/>

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This fact sheet is meant to provide general health information and is not intended to be medical advice or otherwise take the place of your doctor's orders or to diagnose your specific health problems. Check with your doctor if you have any questions or concerns about your health.