

SAFE DRINKING WATER IN AN EMERGENCY

Being Prepared

➤ How much water do I need to store for emergency use?

- ◆ One gallon of water per person per day for drinking
- ◆ One half gallon per person per day for food preparation and basic hygiene
- ◆ A three-day water supply is minimum, a two week supply is recommended
- ◆ Additional considerations:
 - ◆ Individual needs vary, depending on age, physical condition, activity, diet, and climate.
 - ◆ Children, nursing mothers, and ill people need more water.
 - ◆ Very hot temperatures can double the amount of water needed.
 - ◆ A medical emergency might require additional water.

➤ How should water be stored?

Commercially Bottled Water

- ◆ This is the safest and most reliable water supply for emergencies.
- ◆ Keep it in its original container.
- ◆ Do not open it until you need to use it.
- ◆ Observe the expiration date or “use by” date.
- ◆ Store in a cool, dry location.

Personally Prepared Containers

Food-grade water storage containers

- ◆ Clean containers with soap and water, and rinse well.
- ◆ Fill container to the top with tap water.
- ◆ Tightly close the container using the original cap.
- ◆ Write the date on the outside of the container.
- ◆ Store in a cool, dark place.
- ◆ Replace the water every six months if not using bottled water.

2-liter plastic soft drink bottles

- ◆ Thoroughly clean with soap and water, and rinse well.
- ◆ Sanitize by adding a solution of 1 teaspoon nonscented household chlorine bleach to a quart of water.
- ◆ Swish the sanitizing solution in the bottle covering all surfaces and then thoroughly rinse with water.

➤ More on water storage

Do not use plastic jugs or cardboard containers that have held milk or fruit juice. Protein and sugars cannot adequately be removed from these containers and they provide an environment for bacteria when water is stored in them.

Do not use glass containers. They are too heavy and can break.

After the Emergency

Water may not be safe to drink, clean with, or bathe in after an emergency, such as a flood or earthquake. During and after a disaster, water can become contaminated with microorganisms, such as bacteria, sewage, agricultural or industrial waste, chemicals, and other substances that can cause illness or death.

➤ Listen to and follow advice from local health departments or water agencies

Local authorities will tell you if tap water is safe to drink or to use for cooking and bathing. If the water is not safe to drink, authorities will give instructions to use bottled water only, or to boil or disinfect the water.



Use only bottled water, boiled, or treated water for drinking, cooking, preparing food, washing dishes, cleaning, brushing teeth, washing hands, making ice, and bathing until your water supply is tested and found safe.

➤ **Protect the water sources in your home**

Shut off incoming water by locating the main valve and closing it.

➤ **Hidden water sources in the home**

- ◆ Pipes: To use water in the pipes, let air into the plumbing by turning on the faucet in your home at the highest level. A small amount of water will trickle out. Then obtain water from the lowest faucet in the house.
- ◆ Hot water tank: Shut off the electricity and gas, and then open the drain at the bottom of the tank. Start the water flowing by turning off the water intake valve at the tank and turning on a hot water faucet. Refill the tank before turning the gas or electricity back on.
- ◆ Melt ice cubes.

➤ **Ways to treat water**

Boiling

- ◆ Boiling is the safest method of treating water.
- ◆ In a large pot or kettle, bring water to a rolling boil for one full minute.
- ◆ Let the water cool before drinking.
- ◆ Boiled water will taste better if you put oxygen back into it by pouring the water back and forth between two clean containers.

Chlorination

- ◆ Household liquid bleach can be used to treat water.
- ◆ Use only regular nonscented household liquid bleach that contains 5.25 to 6.0 percent sodium hypochlorite.
- ◆ Do not use scented, color-safe bleaches or those with added cleaners.
- ◆ Use bleach from a newly opened or unopened container, as the potency of bleach diminishes with time.
- ◆ Add 8 drops (1/8 teaspoon) of bleach per gallon of water, stir, and let stand for 30 minutes.
- ◆ The water should have a slight bleach odor. If it does not, then repeat the dosage and let stand for another 15 minutes. If it still does not have a slight odor of bleach, discard it and find another source of water.
- ◆ Other chemicals, such as iodine or water treatment products that do not contain 5.25 to 6.0 percent sodium hypochlorite as the only active ingredient are not recommended.

Additional Guidelines

If supplies run low, never ration water. Drink the amount you need today, and try to find more for tomorrow. Reducing activity and staying cool will minimize the amount of water the body needs.

Resources

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) www.fema.gov

The American Red Cross www.redcross.org

Family Preparedness Program www.ready.gov

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters

Information Compliments of

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