

Disasters and Food Safety

How to Build an Emergency Food Supply



Access to safe food is a major concern in any emergency or natural disaster. When preparing an emergency food supply, remember these helpful tips to help reduce stress and ensure families have access to safe and healthful foods.

How Much Food Do I Need?

Plan to store enough food for each household member for 14-30 days. This can be as easy as increasing the number of staples and non-perishable foods usually on hand.

If household members typically eat certain meals away from home, such as a child eating school lunch or a spouse eating out on their lunch break, include them in the food supply list.

Be Intentional When Selecting Items for Emergency Food Supply

- Non-perishable items that can be stored safely at room temperature
- Meat and other perishable items that can be frozen
- Foods high in nutrient value and low in sodium and added sugar. Be sure they are high in vitamins, minerals, healthy fats, and complex carbohydrates
- Foods that make great leftovers
- Foods from all five food groups and in different forms: canned, frozen, fresh, and dried
- Foods that fit the special diets, allergies, or medical family needs
- Favorite family food
- Infant formula and baby food, if needed
- Food for pets
- Manual can opener, disposable utensils, paper products, and plastic containers
- Foods are labeled and put away for emergency use only

Keep supplies fresh by rotating non-perishable staple items. Keep a list of staple foods on shelves and in the freezer. Indicate the amount available, date purchased, date opened, and use-by date, and replace the date if known.

Storage Tips

Keep non-perishable items in a cool, dry location. Canned foods should be stored between 50 and 70 degrees. Store canned goods away from sunlight, damp areas, or spots near vents, pipes, or furnaces to avoid temperature fluctuations. Place open packages of sugar, flour, dried fruits, and nuts in airtight containers.

Keep supplies fresh by rotating non-perishable staple items. Date items with a marker to see easily which items should be used first or discarded.

When opening packages, do so carefully so the packaging can be resealed and tightly closed after use.

My Prepared Pantry Includes

Frozen Foods	# On hand	Dried Foods	# On hand	Canned Foods	# On hand	Other	# On hand

Emergency Foods

Pack emergency food pantry with these foods:

Protein

- Canned meats and fish like chicken, tuna, and salmon
- Dried or canned beans, peas and lentils
- Nut butter
- Nuts and seeds
- Eggs
- Fresh meats and fish that can be frozen
- Dried meat

Fruits

- Canned fruits packed in juice
- Dried fruit
- Frozen fruit
- Fresh fruit with a longer shelf-life, like apples and citrus

Vegetables

- Canned vegetables low in sodium
- Frozen vegetables
- Fresh vegetables with a longer shelf-life, like beets, carrots, onions, potatoes, and winter squash

Grains

- Rice and pasta
- Breads like English muffins, bagels, etc.
- Cereal and oats or oatmeal
- Tortillas
- Flour
- Baking mixes like muffins, pancakes, cornbread, etc.
- Granola bars
- Popcorn

Dairy

- Fresh milk
- Shelf-stable milk, aseptic or powdered
- Yogurt, kefir
- Cheese

Other

- Pet food
- Infant formula, baby food
- Bottled water — 1 gallon per person per day*
- Other bottled beverages or drink mixes
- Canned soup, broth
- Dried herbs and spices

*For more information on water needs, visit [FEMA](https://www.fema.gov).

Call Your Local Office

Contact your local Illinois Extension office with your food safety questions: go.illinois.edu/FindILExtension.

References

- [Food and Water in an Emergency](https://www.fema.gov), FEMA
- [Disasters and Emergencies](https://www.ready.gov), Ready.Gov
- [Preparing an Emergency Food Supply](https://www.uga.edu), Short Term Food Storage, University of Georgia
- [Cold Storage Conditions](https://www.umaine.edu), University of Maine Extension

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