

Water: The Absolute Necessity

Stocking water reserves and learning how to purify contaminated water should be among your top priorities in preparing for an emergency. You should store at least a two week supply of water for each member of your family. Everyone's needs will differ, depending on age, physical condition, activity, diet and climate. A normally active person needs to drink at least two quarts of water each day. Hot environments can double that amount.

Children, nursing mothers, and ill people will need more. You will need additional water for food preparation and hygiene. Store a total of at least one gallon per person, per day. If your supplies begin to run low, remember: Never ration water. Drink the amount you need today and try to find more for tomorrow. You can minimize the amount of water your body needs by reducing activity and staying cool.

How to Store Emergency Water Supplies

Store one gallon of water per person per day—two quarts for drinking, two quarts for food preparation and sanitation. Store water in thoroughly washed plastic, glass, fiberglass, or enamel-lined metal containers. Never use a container that has held toxic substances because tiny amounts may remain in the container's pores. Sound plastic containers, such as soft drink bottles, are best. You can also purchase food-grade

plastic buckets or drums. Before storing your water, treat it with a preservative such as chlorine bleach to prevent the growth of microorganisms. Use liquid bleach that contains 5.25 percent sodium hypochlorite and no soap. Some containers warn, "Not for Personal Use". You can disregard these warnings if the label states sodium hypochlorite is the only active ingredient and if you use only the small quantities in these instructions.

Three Easy Ways to Purify Water

Purification Tablets release chlorine or iodine. They are inexpensive and available at most sporting goods stores and some drug stores. Follow the package directions. Usually one tablet is enough for one quart of water. Double the dose for cloudy water.

Boiling is the safest method of purifying water. Bring water to a rolling boil for 10 minutes, keeping in mind that some water will evaporate. Let the water cool before drinking. Boiled water will taste better if you put oxygen back into it by pouring it back and forth between two containers. This will also improve the taste of stored water.

Chlorination uses liquid chlorine bleach to kill microorganisms. Add two drops of bleach per quart of water (four drops if the water is cloudy), stir and let stand for 30 minutes. If the water does not taste and smell of chlorine at that point, add another dose and let stand another 15 minutes.

If your water supply is limited, try to avoid foods that are high in fat and protein and don't stock salty foods, since they will make you thirsty. Try to eat salt-free crackers, whole grain cereals, and canned foods with high liquid content.

