

EMERGENCY FOOD SUPPLY AND 72-HOUR KIT FOOD

Store at least a several-day supply of nonperishable food your household will eat, plus a manual can opener (Ready.gov). FEMA says to consider a two-week supply. Foods that need no refrigeration, water, special preparation, or cooking are best.

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An emergency food supply does not have to be special food. FEMA's booklet *Food and Water in an Emergency* says you may not need to buy anything new: "You can use the canned goods, dry mixes, and other staples on your cupboard shelves." The work is choosing the right foods, storing them well, and rotating them.

HOW MUCH FOOD TO STORE

The official guidance gives three time frames:

- **72-hour kit:** FEMA's basic disaster supplies kit includes a "three-day supply of nonperishable food and manual can opener" (FEMA). This is the food that goes in the kit you can grab and carry.
- **At home:** Ready.gov says to "store at least a several-day supply of non-perishable food."
- **Longer:** FEMA says that even though it is unlikely an emergency would cut off your food supply for two weeks, "consider maintaining a supply that will last that long."

Count everyone in the household, including infants and pets, and start with the three-day kit. Build toward two weeks from there.

WHAT TO STORE

FEMA's rule of thumb: "Foods that require no refrigeration, water, special preparation, or cooking are best." Pick foods that are high in calories and nutrition and that your family will actually eat. FEMA notes that familiar foods "lift morale and give a feeling of security in times of stress."

Ready.gov suggests:

- Ready-to-eat canned meats, fruits, and vegetables, with a can opener
- Protein or fruit bars
- Dry cereal or granola

- Peanut butter
- Dried fruit
- Canned juices
- Non-perishable pasteurized milk
- High-energy foods
- Food for infants
- Comfort and stress foods

Ready.gov also says to “be sure to include a manual can opener and eating utensils.” FEMA adds disposable utensils.

■ TIP

Water is part of your food plan. If your water supply is limited, FEMA says not to eat salty foods, since they make you thirsty, and to choose salt-free crackers, whole grain cereals, and canned foods with high liquid content instead. For how much water to store and how to treat it, see emergency water.

SPECIAL DIETS, OLDER ADULTS, AND ALLERGIES

FEMA says people with special diets and allergies “will need particular attention, as will babies, toddlers, and the elderly.” It suggests canned dietetic foods, juices, and soups for people who are ill or elderly. Ready.gov’s short version: “Remember any special dietary needs.”

If someone in your home follows a medical diet, build that person’s supply first, and check every item against their restrictions when you rotate stock.

FOOD FOR INFANTS

CDC says that during a natural disaster, “breastfeeding is the safest way to feed an infant.”

For formula-fed babies, CDC says ready-to-feed infant formula “is the safest option for formula feeding during an emergency or disaster.” It needs no water to prepare and comes in sterile, single-use containers. Ready.gov gives the same advice: “Use ready-to-feed formula. If you must mix infant formula use bottled water or boiled water as a last resort.”

CDC also says:

- Powdered infant formula “requires safe water to prepare the formula.” Use the exact amount of water and formula listed on the container, and do not dilute formula. CDC says too much water

may not meet the infant's nutritional needs, and too little may cause dehydration.

- Use prepared formula within 2 hours of preparation and within 1 hour from when feeding begins.
- Throw away any formula left in the bottle after a feeding.

CDC's emergency list for families with infants says to check your kit monthly to be sure you have enough formula for your baby's current needs for several days. It also lists a manual breast pump in case of a power outage, and says that if you cannot clean bottles and nipples with safe water and soap, do not use them.

PETS

FEMA's booklet says: "Don't forget nonperishable foods for your pets." Store their food on the same rotation as yours.

HOW TO STORE EMERGENCY FOOD

FEMA's storage tips:

- Keep food in a dry, cool spot, a dark area if possible.
- Open food boxes and resealable containers carefully so you can close them tightly after each use.
- Wrap cookies and crackers in plastic bags and keep them in sealed containers.
- Empty open packages of sugar, dried fruits, and nuts into screw-top jars or airtight canisters to protect them from pests.
- Inspect all food for signs of spoilage before use.
- Throw out canned goods that become swollen, dented, or corroded.

Ready.gov adds: keep canned food in a cool, dry place, and store boxed food in tightly closed plastic or metal containers.

ROTATION AND SHELF LIFE

FEMA recommends first-in, first-out: "Use foods before they go bad, and replace them with fresh supplies, dated with ink or marker. Place new items at the back of the storage area and older ones in front."

FEMA's booklet gives general replacement guidelines:

- **Use within six months:** boxed powdered milk, dried fruit, dry crisp crackers, potatoes.
- **Use within one year, or before the date on the label:** canned condensed meat and vegetable soups; canned fruits, fruit juices, and vegetables; ready-to-eat and uncooked instant cereals; peanut

butter; jelly; hard candy and canned nuts; vitamins.

- **May be stored indefinitely in proper containers and conditions:** wheat, vegetable oils, dried corn, baking powder, soybeans, instant coffee, tea, and cocoa, salt, noncarbonated soft drinks, white rice, bouillon products, dry pasta, and powdered milk in nitrogen-packed cans.

FEMA says to review your disaster kit at least once a year or as your family's needs change. Ready.gov says to replace expired items as needed and "re-think your needs every year."

EATING DURING A POWER OUTAGE

FEMA gives an order for using food when the electricity goes off:

1. **First**, use perishable food from the refrigerator, pantry, and garden.
2. **Then**, use food from the freezer. Post a list of what is inside on the door so you open it less.
3. **Finally**, start on nonperishable foods and staples.

CDC says food stays safe for about 4 hours in a closed refrigerator, 48 hours in a full freezer, and 24 hours in a half-full freezer. CDC's rule for anything doubtful: "When in doubt, throw it out!" Never taste food to check whether it is safe. The full timeline is in what to do when the power goes out.

COOKING WITHOUT POWER

Ready.gov says commercially canned food may be eaten out of the can without warming. If you do heat food in its can, remove the label, wash and disinfect the can, and open the can before heating.

For warming food, Ready.gov lists candle warmers, chafing dishes, fondue pots, and a fireplace. FEMA says to use only approved devices for warming food and to put out open flames before leaving the room.

■ WARNING

Charcoal grills and camp stoves are for outdoor use only (Ready.gov). Ready.gov's power outage guidance says to use them at least 20 feet from windows and never to heat your home with a gas stovetop or oven. See generator safety for carbon monoxide warning signs.

FOOD SAFETY AFTER A FLOOD OR STORM

CDC says to throw out food that may have touched floodwater or stormwater, food in packages that are not waterproof, and home-canned foods. Also discard canned foods or food containers that are

bulging, open, or damaged, and cans that spurt liquid or foam when you open them (CDC). CDC's page explains how to clean and sanitize undamaged commercial cans if you want to save them.

IF FOOD RUNS LOW

FEMA's booklet says that if activity is reduced, healthy people can survive on half their usual food intake for an extended period, and that food, unlike water, may be rationed safely, "except for children and pregnant women." FEMA also says never to ration water: drink what you need today and look for more for tomorrow.

FEMA's nutrition tips for during and after a disaster: eat at least one well-balanced meal each day, take in enough calories for any work you have to do, and include vitamin, mineral, and protein supplements in your stockpile.

EMERGENCY FOOD CHECKLIST

72-HOUR KIT

- ☐ Three days of nonperishable food per person that needs no cooking or water
- ☐ Manual can opener and eating utensils
- ☐ Ready-to-feed formula or other infant food, if needed
- ☐ Food for any special diet or allergy
- ☐ Pet food

HOME SUPPLY

- ☐ At least several days of nonperishable food, building toward two weeks
- ☐ Familiar foods and comfort foods your household will eat
- ☐ Low-salt choices in case water runs short
- ☐ Appliance thermometers in the refrigerator and freezer
- ☐ Outdoor-only cooking option, such as a camp stove or charcoal grill

UPKEEP

- ☐ Store food in a dry, cool, dark place
- ☐ Date new items and put them behind older ones
- ☐ Check infant formula supply monthly
- ☐ Throw out swollen, dented, or corroded cans
- ☐ Review the whole supply at least once a year

For the supplies that go with your food in a shelter kit, see fallout shelter supplies.

TRACK

Power outage

SHEET

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COMPILED FROM THESE SOURCES

- 1.** Ready.gov, Food
- 2.** Ready.gov, Build a Kit
- 3.** FEMA and American Red Cross, Food and Water in an Emergency (FEMA 477, 2004)
- 4.** CDC, Keep Food Safe After a Disaster or Emergency
- 5.** CDC, Facts About Infant Feeding During Emergencies
- 6.** CDC, Emergency List for Families With Infants and Young Children

Every safety claim on this sheet links to its primary source.