

Water is the most important part of your emergency supply kit! You can't survive for more than 3 days without water. If a disaster disrupts the water supply to your house, you may have to rely on water you have stored.

How much water should I store?

You need to drink at least 2 quarts of water per day to be sufficiently hydrated. And you need water for cooking and sanitation. That's why it's recommended that you store a gallon per person for each day for at least 3 days or 3 gallons for each person to take care of drinking, cooking, and hygiene needs for the first three days after a disaster. And don't forget your pets. If you have room to store more than the minimum, then do it!

Tips on how to store a supply of emergency drinking water

Tip # 1: Store tap water in plastic containers with screw-cap lids, such as 2-liter soda pop bottles or food-grade plastic jugs. Thoroughly wash and rinse the container with water. (For extra safety, rinse with a weak solution of liquid chlorine bleach—8-10 drops in 2 cups water—and empty this solution out. Then rinse twice with tap water.) Fill to the top with tap water, slightly squeeze it and seal tightly. Label it "drinking water" and date it. Store in a cool, dark place such as under a bed or behind a sofa. Empty and refill every 6 months.

Do not use glass bottles or old bleach bottles or any container that has held a toxic substance. Glass breaks too easily. The plastic of bleach bottles contains chemicals that get into the water and make it unfit for drinking. Avoid using plastic milk jugs, as they don't seal tightly and get very brittle over time.

Tip # 2: You can buy containers that are designed to store water at the grocery or camping supply stores. These can be various sizes from one gallon to 55-gallon drums. Be sure the containers are food grade plastic and designed for water storage. Rinse, fill and replace same as above. Remember, the larger the container, the heavier and more difficult to pour the water from.

Tip # 3: You can buy bottled water at a grocery or warehouse store. Label with the date and store in a cool, dark place. Replace bottled water before the expiration date on the bottles or at least once a year.

Tip # 4: Store your water bottles on shelves or layers of cardboard, not directly on concrete. Concrete will degrade plastic and leach chemicals into water.

Tip # 5: You can use the water from your hot water heater, if the supply line has not been broken. (Be sure it's strapped down securely, and flush the heater yearly to remove sediment.) This water may not be drinkable without treatment but can be used for washing.

How to purify water

Boil water 10 minutes, cool, then stir in 16 drops of regular strength, no additives, household chlorine bleach per gallon of boiled water. Let the bleached water stand 30 minutes or longer before using. Pour between two clean containers to aerate for tastier water. If the water is cloudy, strain through 3 layers of cotton before boiling. The combination of boiling water and treating it with chlorine bleach kills bacteria, viruses and parasites that can cause illness.

Smart Ideas 

- *If you use 2-liter soda pop bottles, store at least 6 of these for each person.*
- *If you regularly drink bottled water, get an extra case or more for storage. As you buy more, put the new case on the bottom, and take water to drink from the top case.*
- *An easy way to remember when to empty and refill your water is to do it when you change your clock in fall and spring for daylight savings time!*