

Emergency Food Supplies

You don't need to go out and buy unfamiliar foods to prepare an emergency food supply. You can use canned foods, dry mixes and other staples on your cupboard shelves. In fact, familiar foods are important. They can lift morale and give a feeling of security in times of stress. Also, canned foods won't require cooking, water or special preparation.

If your water supply is limited, try to avoid foods that are high in 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. The following are recommended short-term food supplies.

Short-Term Food Supplies

Following a hurricane, electrical power may be out for at least several days, making it difficult to buy food, therefore your emergency food supply should last at least 72 hours. Even though it is unlikely that an emergency would cut off your food supply for a greatly extended period, you might consider preparing a supply that will last a week or longer.

The easiest way to develop an extended stockpile is to increase the amount of basic foods that you normally keep on your shelves. Remember to compensate for the amount you eat from other sources (such as restaurants and work lunches) during an average period. You may already have an extended supply of food on hand. Keeping it fresh is simple. Just rotate your supply once or twice a year.

Special Considerations to Keep in Mind

As you stock food, take into account your family's unique needs and tastes. Try to include foods that they will enjoy and that are also high in calories and nutrition. Foods that require no refrigeration, preparation or cooking are best.

Individuals with special diets and allergies will need particular attention, as will babies, toddlers and the elderly. Nursing mothers may need liquid formula, in case they are unable to nurse. Canned dietetic foods, juices and soups may be helpful for the ill or elderly. Make sure you have a can opener and disposable utensils. And don't forget non-perishable foods for your pets.

How to Store Your Short-Term Stockpile

Keep canned foods in a dry place where the temperature is fairly cool (not above 70 degrees Fahrenheit and not below freezing). To protect boxed foods from pests and extend their shelf life, store the boxes in tightly closed cans or metal containers.

Rotate your food supply. 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. Your emergency food supply should be of the highest quality possible. Inspect your reserves periodically to make sure there are no broken seals or dented containers.

How to Cook if the Power Goes Out

For emergency cooking you can use a fireplace, or a charcoal grill or camp stove **outdoors only**. You can also heat food with candle warmers, chafing dishes and fondue pots. Canned food can be eaten right out of the can. If you heat in the can, be sure to open the can and remove the label first.

Consider the amount of cooking time needed for particular foods. If you have limited heat for cooking, choose foods that cook quickly. Do not cook frozen foods unless you have ample heat for cooking. Most frozen foods require considerably more cooking time and heat than canned goods.

Observe Health Precautions

If you are without refrigeration, open only enough food for one meal. Some foods can be kept a short time without refrigeration. Cooked vegetables, meat, and meat dishes can be kept unrefrigerated from noon until the evening meal. Do not keep these dishes overnight without refrigeration.

Do not serve foods that spoil easily, such as ground meats, creamed foods, hash, custards, meat pies, and any food containing mayonnaise. These foods are high risk for botulism poisoning.

If necessary, substitute canned and powdered milk for fresh milk. Canned milk will keep safely for a few hours after you open the can. If you are using milk to feed a baby, open a fresh can for each bottle. Use only boiled or distilled water to mix powdered milk. Use powdered milk immediately after it is mixed.

Prepare and eat foods in their original containers, if possible. Water for washing dishes may be scarce.