

Creating and Storing an Emergency Water Supply



During a water-related emergency or outbreak, clean drinking water may not be available. Prepare yourself for an emergency by creating and storing a supply of water that will meet your family's needs.

Bottled Water

Unopened commercially bottled water is the safest and most reliable source of water in an emergency. If you do not have bottled water, you can make your water safe to drink by following the instructions listed on our [Making Water Safe in an Emergency](#) page and using clean containers to collect and store your water.

How Much Emergency Water to Store

- Store at least **1 gallon of water per person per day for 3 days for drinking and sanitation.** Try to store a 2-week supply if possible.
- Consider storing more water than this for hot climates, pregnant women, and persons who are sick.
- Observe the expiration date for store-bought water.
- Replace non-store-bought water every 6 months.
- Store a bottle of unscented liquid household chlorine bleach (label should say it contains between 5% and 9% of sodium hypochlorite) to [disinfect your water](#), if necessary, and to use for general cleaning and sanitizing.

Choosing a Container

When storing safe water (water that has been treated to make it safe to use), it is best to use food-grade water storage containers, which do not transfer toxic substances into the water they are holding. FDA-approved food-grade storage containers can be found at surplus or camping supply stores. Contact the manufacturer if you are not sure if a storage container is food grade. If you are not able to use a food-grade water storage container, be sure the container you choose:

- Has a top that can be closed tightly
- Is made of durable, unbreakable materials (i.e., not glass)
- If possible, use a container with a narrow neck or opening so water can be poured out.



DO NOT USE containers that previously have been used to hold liquid or solid toxic chemicals (bleach, pesticides, etc.)



Cleaning and Sanitizing a Water Storage Container Before Use

- Before filling with safe water, use these steps to clean and sanitize water storage containers:
 1. Wash the storage container and rinse completely with water.
 2. Sanitize the container with a solution made by mixing 1 teaspoon of unscented liquid household chlorine bleach in 1 quart of water. Use bleach that contains 5%–9% sodium hypochlorite.
 3. Cover the container tightly and shake it well. Make sure the sanitizing bleach solution touches all inside surfaces of the container.
 4. Wait at least 30 seconds and then pour the sanitizing solution out of the container.
 5. Let the empty sanitized container air-dry before use OR rinse the empty container with safe water (water that has been treated).
 6. Pour clean water into the sanitized container and cover with a tight lid.

Removing and Storing Water

- Tips for removing safe water out of the container:
 - If using a scoop or other device, use a clean one each time you remove safe water from the storage container to help avoid contaminating the water.
 - Before scooping out the safe water, try not to touch the water or insides of the container with your hands.
 - Never scoop safe water with your hands.
- Tips for storing safe water in a container after cleaning and sanitizing:
 - Label container as “drinking water” and include storage date.
 - Replace stored water every six months.
 - Keep stored water in a place with a cool temperature (50–70°F).
 - Do not store water containers in direct sunlight.
 - Do not store water containers in areas where toxic substances, such as gasoline or pesticides, are present

More Information

- [Ready.gov](#) 
- [Build a Kit](#) 
- [Natural Disasters and Severe Weather](#)
- [Prepare Your Health for Hurricane Season](#)
- [Plan Ahead](#)