



TIPS ON FOOD IN AN EMERGENCY

In a disaster, your community could be severely affected. You might be forced to rely on what is available to you in your own home for days on end. You could be cut off from drinkable water and electricity. By preparing emergency provisions, you can turn what could be a life-threatening situation into a manageable problem.

Stock enough supplies at home to meet your needs for at least two weeks. Set aside at least three days worth of supplies in a disaster supplies kit that can be used in case you need to evacuate. You may choose to store food for a longer time if you expect that local stores may be impacted by the disaster and food supplies will be scarce. Store these supplies in sturdy, easy to carry, water resistant containers. Consider including the following and store in the following manner:

- At least a three-day supply of water (one gallon per person per day)
- Ready to eat food such as canned meats, peanut butter, crackers, canned fruit, juice boxes
- Food for infants, and persons with special diets
- A manual can opener
- Keep food covered at all times and in a dry, cool spot
- Wrap cookies and crackers in plastic bags, and keep them in tight containers
- Empty opened packages of sugar, dried fruits and nuts into screw-top jars or air-tight cans to protect them from pests
- Use food and water before they spoil, 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. Replace items every six months.

It is important to keep in mind the shelf-life of foods for storage and rotate when necessary. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions and look for expiration dates on containers. When these are not available, use the following as a general guide. Foods like wheat, vegetable oils, soybeans, instant coffee, tea and cocoa, salt, white rice, dry pasta, and powdered milk in nitrogen-packed cans may be stored indefinitely in proper containers and conditions. Canned vegetable soups, peanut butter, jelly, ready-to-eat cereals, canned fruits, fruit juices, and vitamin C need to be used within one year. Be sure to check expiration dates on individual items.

When Food Supplies Are Low...

If activity is reduced, healthy people can survive on half their usual food intake for an extended period and without any food for many days. Food, unlike water, may be rationed safely, except for children and pregnant women. 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.

You don't need to go out and buy unfamiliar foods to prepare an emergency food supply. You can use the 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 usually don't require cooking, water or special preparation. 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 or cooking are best.

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

For more information contact the American Red Cross Alabama Gulf Coast Chapter (251)438-2571 or www.redcrossalcoast.org