



FOOD

HOW MUCH

DO YOU NEED IN AN EMERGENCY?

The time to think about how much food you need in an emergency is before the emergency strikes. At Nexis Response, we want you to be fully prepared to take care of your family's food needs when the time comes. Carefully review the information in this guide and then take the necessary steps now to stock your emergency food supplies accordingly.



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WHAT KINDS OF EMERGENCIES SHOULD YOU PLAN FOR?

There is a big difference between survival conditions and emergency disaster conditions. You need to know the difference in order to plan accordingly. Survival conditions occur most often—but not always—in the wild, where modern conveniences are nowhere to be found. Such conditions usually require foraging and hunting or fishing for food.

This guide is for planning food supplies for emergency disaster conditions. Emergency

disasters can be planned for ahead of time, since they usually occur in civilized areas where you can stock and access the appropriate type and quantities of food for you and your loved ones. Examples of emergencies you can plan for include: long-term power outages; natural disasters such as floods, hurricanes, tornadoes and earthquakes; vehicular accidents; and man-made disasters, such as bomb strikes and nuclear events.

HOW LONG CAN HUMANS GO WITHOUT FOOD?

Humans can go for long periods without eating. Mahatma Gandhi once endured a food fast of 21 days. However, the length of time that anyone can survive without food is relative to their beginning body weight and height, overall health condition, and genetic factors. Mahatma Gandhi was a man of slight build, already accustomed to modest food intake. You should not expect that your

family can transition overnight from eating a typical American diet, complete with snacks, to anything resembling a 21-day fast. In addition, a person who already suffers from a health condition may not be able to go as long without food as a robust person. So, the first order of business is to consider who your emergency food supplies are for and their overall physical condition, including their age.

WHAT ARE THE GOALS FOR STOCKING FOOD?

The basic goal for stocking food for emergencies is to:

- Supply at least the minimum daily caloric requirements for each person.
- Have enough food to last for the duration of the emergency
- Stock food that will not perish before it's needed
- Provide sufficient vitamins and minerals to sustain life

However, there are other considerations when stocking food for emergencies:

- Supply enough calories to sustain muscle strength needed to overcome physical challenges related to the emergency
- Supply food that your family will be inclined to eat, especially infants, children and pets
- Supply a variety of foods that will satisfy the taste buds, especially in an enduring, oppressive emergency situation
- Supply food that also addresses any specific dietary or allergy needs you, your family and your pets may have



GENERAL FOOD GUIDELINES FOR EMERGENCIES

When selecting food for emergencies, there are certain guidelines to follow, including:

- Choose foods that do not require refrigeration
- Choose foods that are calorically dense
- Choose foods that are nutrient dense
- Choose foods with preservatives
- Avoid relying entirely on foods that need to be hydrated before being edible
- Avoid foods that contain excess sodium
- Avoid foods that have to be cooked prior to eating

CARING FOR PETS IN AN EMERGENCY

When stocking emergency food supplies, remember to stock enough for all your pets. Don't make the mistake of thinking your pets can rely on your leftovers in an emergency. First of all, there won't be leftovers, unless you plan to take away needed nutrients from your human family. Second, scraps and leftovers won't be enough to keep your pets healthy. Pets need their own, separate stash of emergency food supplies. You can choose to purchase pet-specific emergency food rations, or stock up on dried and canned pet food. Be careful though. Even canned and dried pet food doesn't last forever. Carefully monitor the dates on pet food products to avoid accidentally sickening your hungry pet with contaminated or past-the-due-date food.

TYPICAL FOODS TO STOCK FOR EMERGENCIES

Many people stock up on food supplies in case of emergencies. In an effort to provide for their families when disaster strikes, people stock up on:

Cereal	Canned / bottled juice
Crackers	Nuts
Beef/turkey jerky	Seeds
Canned fruit	Ketchup packets
Canned vegetables	Infant formula
Protein bars	Shelf-stable milk
Peanut butter	

The problem with all these choices is that they are perishable. These items each have a limited shelf life ranging from several months to a year or perhaps a little longer (especially the ketchup packets).

There's an argument to be made that having some kind of food on hand is better than having no emergency food supply. But in a true emergency, when no food is available outside the home, relying on perishable food items is simply not good enough. In fact, it can be downright life-threatening. The family stocks up on such items, believing that they now have adequate food to meet their needs in the event of an emergency. What happens next is that the family becomes complacent about their emergency food supply. They forget about the supply, not realizing that it's all become unsafe to eat because it's far past the expiration dates. Only when disaster strikes do they realize too late that they've stocked up on the wrong kinds of food, and it's no longer edible.



HOW MANY DAYS SHOULD AN EMERGENCY FOOD SUPPLY LAST?

There's no set right or wrong answer to this question. The American Red Cross recommends that families store three days' worth of food provisions for emergency purposes. This is assuming your family will either be evacuated from the area or the emergency will end within three days. That's not a horrible recommendation, but it probably won't be sufficient for any emergency more serious than a power outage.

If you really want to ensure that your family has sufficient emergency food, you'll want to have a bare minimum of seven days' worth

of food stocked up for each family member. However, a more realistic – and more responsible – approach is to have a one-month supply of emergency food available for each member of your family. Remember, you're talking about survival. Why would you arrange rations so tight that you have only three or seven days to get back to normal? If the emergency resolves itself or you're able to evacuate before 30 days, then great. You can use those extra rations for next time. Otherwise, you've now got an entire month of emergency food supplies to figure something out for your family.

THE IMPORTANCE OF 5-YEAR SHELF-LIFE FOOD

Stocking your emergency food supply is a serious endeavor. It takes careful consideration to know what to stock and how much food to stock. As such, you should stock with the intention of having the food last a minimum of five years. That's 4.75 years that you can rest assured that your family will have all the food they need to live through an emergency. Almost five years because you'll need the remaining three months or so to review your supply and restock whatever is necessary for the next five years of emergency food rations.

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PLANNING FOR CALORIC INTAKE IS IMPORTANT

When you are calculating how much emergency food your family needs, you need to focus on ensuring that each person takes in the right amount of calories per day. While it's true that most individuals can technically survive for days or weeks without food, this isn't an ideal situation in an emergency. Several negative effects are associated with insufficient caloric intake, including:

- Irritability, antagonism
- Low morale, lethargy
- Muscle weakness
- Disorientation
- Impaired cognitive abilities
- Lowered immune system

- Inability to maintain core body temperature
- Hypothermia, heat exhaustion, heat stroke

Furthermore, these negative physical side effects from insufficient calorie intake can jeopardize survival. They may sabotage recovery efforts by that individual as well as for the entire family, as they struggle not only to survive themselves, but also care for the weakened person. Simply put, your goal is to maximize health for each member of the group. No one is doing the family any favors by sacrificing their own food rations. If you plan correctly, no one will feel the need to do so.

HOW TO CALCULATE HOW MUCH EMERGENCY FOOD YOUR FAMILY NEEDS

The most common metric used to determine calorie needs for an individual is the **Basal Metabolic Rate (BMR)**. The basal metabolic rate is the rate at which the body

uses energy while at rest to maintain the very basic bodily functions necessary to stay alive, such as breathing, heart pumping and minimal brain function.

CALCULATING BMR PER PERSON

BMR varies from one individual to another, according to gender, height, age, weight and activity levels. To figure the BMR for each member of your family, you can calculate it manually or locate a BMR calculator on the web. Either way you choose, the resulting number is the minimum calories to be consumed.

Women: $(4.35 \times \text{weight rounded up to nearest pound}) + (4.7 \times \text{height in inches}) - (4.7 \times \text{age in years}) + 655 = \text{BMR}$

Men: $(6.23 \times \text{weight rounded up to nearest pound}) + (12.7 \times \text{height in inches}) - (6.8 \times \text{age in years}) + 66 = \text{BMR}$

Another method to figure minimum daily calorie needs is called the **Harris Benedict Equation**, which takes activity levels into account to determine daily caloric needs.

Sedentary (little or no exercise): $\text{BMR} \times 1.2$

Lightly active (weekend exerciser): $\text{BMR} \times 1.375$

Moderately active (3-5 days per week): $\text{BMR} \times 1.55$

Very active (heavy exercise on a daily basis): $\text{BMR} \times 1.725$

Extra active (very strenuous sports or other activity multiple hours each day) $\text{BMR} \times 1.9$

Remember the emergency situation your family will be in when using the Harris Benedict Equation. In all likelihood, your family members will have only light activity each day as you wait out the emergency. However, also take into account the potential need to evacuate on foot (fire, prolonged power outages, downed trees, blocked roads) or to swim or navigate by boat (flood, mudslide) if rescue teams don't arrive. Evacuation efforts entail more activity and thus more calorie usage.

SUMMARY

Don't take chances when stocking emergency food for your family. Don't assume that an emergency is only going to last for three days. In something as common as frozen power lines during a snowstorm, for example, power could be out in your neighborhood for weeks at a time. When it comes to protecting your family and pets, it pays to play it safe. Using this guide, stock up on adequate emergency food supplies today.

SOURCES:

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