



# Emergency water safety

It's important to have an emergency water supply because safe drinking water may not be available during an emergency.

## Before an emergency

### Step 1: Figure out how much emergency water you need

You need enough water to drink, cook, and for basic hygiene.

Recommended supply: Store at least 1 gallon of water per person, per day.

**Aim for a 2-week supply** (14 gallons per person).



### Step 2: Decide how to store your emergency water

**The safest water is unopened, commercially bottled water.** Take note of the expiration date of store-bought water.

If you plan to fill your own container with water:

- Use FDA-approved food-grade containers.
- 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 (not glass).
  - Has a narrow neck or opening, if possible, so you can pour water out of it.

**Before you fill it with water, follow these steps to clean and sanitize water storage containers:**

1. Wash the container with dish soap 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 (4 cups) 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 container air-dry before use.
6. Pour clean water into the sanitized container and cover it with a tight lid.

#### Storage tips:

- Label containers "Drinking Water" with the date they were filled.
- Replace every 6 months.
- Keep in a cool, dry place (50°F–70°F).

### Step 3: Set aside tools to purify water

It's important to have the ability to purify water in the case of an emergency. This could be unscented bleach, purifying tablets, or ultra-filtration equipment.

Tap water may not be safe to use after a disaster or emergency. Untested water can carry *Giardia*, *E. coli*, and other pathogens. If you don't have stored water, you must purify what you find by boiling, disinfecting, or filtering it (see step 2).

## During an emergency

### Step 1: Know your options

Sources of clean water:

- Indoor sources of water could include melted ice cubes, soft water tanks, toilet tanks (NOT the bowl), and water heaters.
- Outdoor sources of water could be a residential swimming pool or hot tub, river, lake, or ponds, but will need to be purified.

### Step 2: Purify water before you use it or drink it (choose ONE option below)

#### Boil

This method will kill bacteria, viruses, and parasites.

**Boiling water is the best method.**



**Boil your water for 1 minute.**

At elevations above 6,500 feet, boil for 3 minutes. Let the water cool.

#### Disinfect

This method will kill most viruses and bacteria

**Add 8 drops or a little less than 1/8 of a teaspoon of 5%–9% unscented household bleach to 1 gallon water.**

For cloudy tap water, use 16 drops or 1/4 teaspoon.

If you don't have household bleach, chlorine dioxide tablets or iodine can be used according to label instructions.



**Add bleach to water.**



**Mix well.**



**Wait at least 30 minutes before using.**

#### Filter

This method can remove parasites.

**Most portable water filters do not remove bacteria or viruses.**

Choose a water filter labeled to remove parasites and follow manufacturer's instructions. Filtered water might need additional treatment to be safe.



### Step 3: Find out where you can get sources of water

Shelters and assistance centers will be activated after a disaster. These locations may provide bottled water to pick up or water tanks where containers can be filled. Look for these or contact your local civic leaders for information on their locations.

