

QUICK-START GUIDE TO PREPAREDNESS



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Taking the first steps is often the hardest. The goal of this “Quick-Start Guide to Preparedness” is to make it easy for you to get started and show you a few things you can do right away to be more prepared.

Start the process by taking a hard look at what crises you need to prepare for and evaluating how severe they might be. Next, do a preparedness check to see where you are. And finally, complete the three quick and easy preparedness tasks found in steps 4 through 6.

Step 1—Consider the Possible Crises You Might Face

Think about your situation. What crises are you most likely to face? What natural disasters are common in your geographic area? Is civil unrest or terrorism a possibility? How about the likelihood of a pandemic or economic collapse? How likely is a personal tragedy, such as injury, illness, job loss, or divorce? In other words, what do you need to be prepared for?

Use table 1, “Possible Crises You Might Face,” to help you identify the crises you need to be prepared for. Circle those you are most likely to face.

Table 1 Possible Crises You Might Face		
Circle the crises or disasters most likely to impact you		
Personal injury Illness Unemployment Divorce Severe storm Tornado Derecho storm Hurricane Ice/snowstorm Severe cold Severe heat	Flood Flash flood Landslide Dam failure Earthquake Tsunami Volcanic eruption Wildfire Drought Solar superstorm Cataclysmic astronomical event	Hazardous-material spill Nuclear accident Disease pandemic Economic disruption Civil unrest Terrorist attack Infrastructure cyberattack War Nuclear attack EMP attack

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Step 2—Evaluate the Severity of a Potential Crisis

Not all crises occur with the same intensity or frequency. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted every part of the world, with hundreds of thousands of lives lost and devastating economic and societal disruption. Yet, the last time the world faced a pandemic of this proportion was a hundred years ago. On the other hand, hurricanes regularly impact the coastal areas along the Gulf and East Coasts of the United States. Based on NOAA calculations, you can expect at least a category 3 or higher hurricane to come close every five years or so if you live in these regions.

Using the Quick-Start Risk Matrix

Use the “Quick-Start Risk Matrix,” table 2, to help identify how devastating a given crisis might be. Place the crises that you anticipate in the grid based on the likelihood of it occurring and how severe it is likely to be. This will help you evaluate your potential risk so you can make decisions about the type of preparations you need to make and how extensive they need to be.

Your Options

You will quickly realize that many crises will interrupt access to basic needs, like water and food. The next two sections give you quick and easy ideas to prepare for that. You’ll find even more solutions in *Crisis Preparedness Handbook*. Not only will you learn more about water and food preparedness, you’ll get ideas for emergency heating, lighting, sanitation, communications, and transportation. Plus, you’ll learn about ways to protect your home and family.

Table 2 Quick-Start Risk Matrix					
How severe is the crisis likely to be?					
		Catastrophic Severe, prolonged, life-threatening disruption	Critical Major disruption, loss of services	Marginal Some disruption, loss of utilities	Negligible Temporary inconvenience
How likely is the crisis to occur?	Frequent Likely to occur repeatedly				
	Probable Likely to occur several times				
	Occasional Likely to occur sometimes				
	Remote Not likely to occur				
	Improbable Very unlikely to occur				

Based on ANSI/AIHA Z10-2005 Risk Management Matrix

Step 3—How Prepared Are You?

Top-Ten Preparedness Check

Although being thoughtfully prepared takes careful planning, goal setting, and action, you can get an idea of how prepared you are by completing the quick assessment in table 3. If there are more check marks in the “Need to Get Started” column than you’d like, steps 4, 5, and 6 will give you ideas for starting. *Crisis Preparedness Handbook* will give you many other helps and tools for your preparations.

Table 3 Top-Ten Preparedness Check				
How prepared are you? Rate yourself! Check the column closest to your preparedness level.		Need to get started	Some work to do	Nailed it!
1	Do you have at least a month’s supply of prescription and OTC medications your family’s needs, as well as a complete first-aid kit?			
2	Do you have water for two weeks or longer? A means to filter or purify water?			
3	Do you have non-perishable food to sustain your family for two weeks?			
4	Do you have a supply of hygiene products, such as toilet paper, feminine products, soap, shampoo, toothpaste, lotion, etc.?			
5	Do you have sanitation products, including paper towels, garbage bags, detergent, disinfectant, and insect repellent?			
6	Do you have protective clothing, including outerwear, durable footwear, and gloves for all family members?			
7	Do you have warm blankets and sleeping bags?			
8	Do you have a supply of disposable plates, cups, bowls, utensils, and alternative cooking options?			
9	Do you have a hand-crank or solar-powered radio? Flashlights? Alternative ways to charge electronics?			
10	Do you have important documents secured, copies of them in alternative places, and a supply of cash?			

Step 4—Store Water for Two Weeks

It quickly gets our attention when there's a problem with our water supply or even the possibility of a problem. At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, people panicked and quickly grabbed up the existing supply of bottled water even though the water supply wasn't at risk. People react the same way whenever a hurricane is forecasted.

How Much Water Should I Store for an Emergency?

The solution to having water when you need it? Stock up on water before there is a crisis! The Ready.gov website recommends you store a minimum of one gallon per day per person for three days. That's enough water for drinking, food preparation, and some hygiene needs. FEMA and the Red Cross advise you to increase that to a two-week supply. So make plans to store enough water for two weeks or more!

Water Storage Options

Storing Water in Bottles

Purchase water at supermarkets or warehouse stores in cases of half-liter (16.9-ounce) bottles. The bottle size and number of bottles in a case may vary. See table 3 to help determine how much water you need for a family of four for three days or two weeks.

Storing Water in Containers

Water can also be stored in collapsible or rigid, portable containers. Look for containers that stack or are easily portable. Water weighs 8.34 pounds per gallon, so a five-gallon container will weigh over forty pounds. See table 3 to learn how many three-and-a-half-, five-, or seven-gallon containers you need.

Set a Goal

Now that you've calculated how much water you need for two weeks, set some goals to get your two-week supply. Your first goal could be to get bottled water for a three-day supply. You can probably accomplish that today or tomorrow. What's next? Do you want all your water in disposable plastic bottles? Or would you rather have reusable storage containers or a combination of both? Make your decision and set a goal to accomplish it. Give yourself a deadline. Learn about more water storage options, unique types of water purification, and effective ways to filter water in *Crisis Preparedness Handbook*.

**Table 4
Water Needed for a Family of Four
for Three Days and Two Weeks
(rounded up)**

	Container size	Number of containers for three days	Number of containers for two weeks
 <p>Nestle Pure Life Bottled Water</p>	<p>0.5 liter (16.9 ounce) There are just under 8 bottles in a gallon.</p>	<p>4 24-bottle cases 2½ 40-bottle case</p>	<p>18 24-bottle cases 12 40-bottle cases</p>
 <p>WaterBrick</p>	<p>3.5 gallon</p>	<p>4 containers</p>	<p>16 containers</p>
 <p>Reliance Fold-a-Carry collapsible water carrier</p>	<p>5 gallon</p>	<p>3 containers</p>	<p>12 containers</p>
 <p>Aquatainer by Reliance at REI</p>	<p>7 gallon</p>	<p>2 containers</p>	<p>8 containers</p>

Step 5—Stockpiling Food

Food for Three Days

Begin by planning emergency food for three days. Start with foods your family will eat. Next, create a basic menu for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Focus on foods that require little or no preparation and that can be eaten without cooking. Table 5 lists basic foods to choose from. Freeze-dried entrées are a good option, but they can be expensive for a family.

Food for Two Weeks

What basic menu ingredients do you usually keep on hand? What's in your pantry, refrigerator, and freezer? Do you have rice, instant potatoes, spaghetti, quinoa, and beans in your pantry? These are the beginnings of a good two-week menu. Plan your menus around these foods. Think about how you stock your refrigerator. Continually using and restocking fresh fruits and vegetables and basic dairy products will make them available for your menu. Purchase meat on sale and keep extra in your freezer. Continually use and replenish it with fresh meat. Use the “Menu Plan for One Week” in table 6 on page 7 to plan your first week's menu. Repeat for the second week.

More Ideas

Two weeks is a good start, but you'll feel more secure if you're prepared for a longer time. *Crisis Preparedness Handbook* helps you with that! It gives you more options and shows you how to create a complete food storage plan customized for your family.

Step 6—Things You “Can't Live Without”

You probably remember the crazy panic buying during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic. Toilet paper, paper towels, Tylenol, hand sanitizer, cold medicines, Clorox wipes, and face masks were all in short supply. It was amazing to see grocery-store shelves completely cleared of basic commodities. It showed us how the supply chain can be impacted by a crisis. It was also a warning that if there is something you “can't live without,” you should prepare so you won't be left short in an emergency.

The solution is simple. It just requires thinking ahead and making a list of the items your family needs—like medications, for example, and things that add to your comfort, security, and sense of well-being.

It might feel overwhelming to purchase extra of all the things on your list. But if you can systematically purchase two or three at a time, it won't take long. Brainstorm with your family to come up with your “Can't Live Without” list. Use table 7 on page 8 to help you get started. Be sure to add your favorites. *Crisis Preparedness Handbook* is also loaded with ideas of things to put on your list.

Table 5
Foods to Include in
Your Menu Planning

- Canned meats, fruits, and vegetables
- Canned soups, stews, chilis, and pastas
- Granola, fruit, and protein bars
- Pudding and fruit cups
- Peanut butter
- Dried fruits, nuts, and trail mix
- Granola or dry cereals
- Canned juices
- Shelf-stable milk or powdered milk
- Freeze-dried breakfast and dinner entrées*

**Table 6
Menu Plan for One Week**

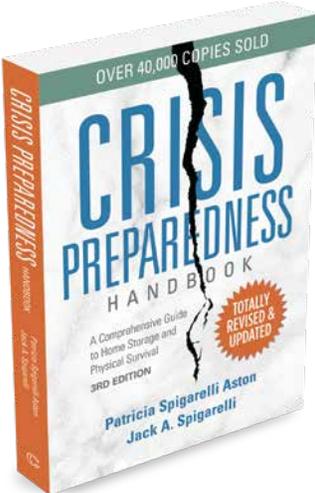
	Breakfast		Lunch		Dinner	
Day 1	<i>Meal:</i>		<i>Meal:</i>		<i>Meal:</i>	
	INGREDIENTS	Pantry: Refrigerator: Freezer:	INGREDIENTS	Pantry: Refrigerator: Freezer:	INGREDIENTS	Pantry: Refrigerator: Freezer:
Day 2	<i>Meal:</i>		<i>Meal:</i>		<i>Meal:</i>	
	INGREDIENTS	Pantry: Refrigerator: Freezer:	INGREDIENTS	Pantry: Refrigerator: Freezer:	INGREDIENTS	Pantry: Refrigerator: Freezer:
Day 3	<i>Meal:</i>		<i>Meal:</i>		<i>Meal:</i>	
	INGREDIENTS	Pantry: Refrigerator: Freezer:	INGREDIENTS	Pantry: Refrigerator: Freezer:	INGREDIENTS	Pantry: Refrigerator: Freezer:
Day 4	<i>Meal:</i>		<i>Meal:</i>		<i>Meal:</i>	
	INGREDIENTS	Pantry: Refrigerator: Freezer:	INGREDIENTS	Pantry: Refrigerator: Freezer:	INGREDIENTS	Pantry: Refrigerator: Freezer:
Day 5	<i>Meal:</i>		<i>Meal:</i>		<i>Meal:</i>	
	INGREDIENTS	Pantry: Refrigerator: Freezer:	INGREDIENTS	Pantry: Refrigerator: Freezer:	INGREDIENTS	Pantry: Refrigerator: Freezer:
Day 6	<i>Meal:</i>		<i>Meal:</i>		<i>Meal:</i>	
	INGREDIENTS	Pantry: Refrigerator: Freezer:	INGREDIENTS	Pantry: Refrigerator: Freezer:	INGREDIENTS	Pantry: Refrigerator: Freezer:
Day 7	<i>Meal:</i>		<i>Meal:</i>		<i>Meal:</i>	
	INGREDIENTS	Pantry: Refrigerator: Freezer:	INGREDIENTS	Pantry: Refrigerator: Freezer:	INGREDIENTS	Pantry: Refrigerator: Freezer:

Table 7 "Can't Live Without"		
Health	Sanitation	Personal comfort
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ibuprofen • Acetaminophen • Prescription drugs • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toilet paper • Disinfectant wipes • Garbage bags • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shampoo • Toothpaste • Contact solution • Hand lotion • Chapstick • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____

Final Thoughts

Thank you for looking over the "Quick Start Guide to Preparedness." I hope it helps you begin to feel the peace and security that comes from being ready for the next crisis in your life. Best of luck in reaching your goals!

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Available at CrisisPreparedness.com