

How Much Do I Need?

Simple household planning tables for water, food days, medicines, sanitation, and rotating supplies. These are planning aids, not a promise that any amount can guarantee survival in every emergency.

Official emergency baseline: CDC and the American Red Cross advise planning about 1 U.S. gallon (3.8 litres) of water per person per day. Red Cross recommends a 3-day portable kit and about a 2-week stay-at-home supply of food and water. Longer timeframes below show the arithmetic so households can plan storage, replenishment, collection, and treatment rather than assuming all water must be stored at once.

Water Planning - Drinking, Food Preparation & Basic Sanitation

Household	Period	Gallons	Litres (approx.)
1 person	1 week	7	26 L
1 person	2 weeks	14	53 L
1 person	1 month	30	114 L
1 person	3 months	90	341 L
1 person	6 months	180	681 L
1 person	1 year	365	1,382 L
2 persons	1 week	14	53 L
2 persons	2 weeks	28	106 L
2 persons	1 month	60	227 L
2 persons	3 months	180	681 L
2 persons	6 months	360	1,363 L
2 persons	1 year	730	2,763 L
4 persons	1 week	28	106 L
4 persons	2 weeks	56	212 L
4 persons	1 month	120	454 L
4 persons	3 months	360	1,363 L
4 persons	6 months	720	2,725 L
4 persons	1 year	1,460	5,526 L
6 persons	1 week	42	159 L
6 persons	2 weeks	84	318 L
6 persons	1 month	180	681 L
6 persons	3 months	540	2,044 L
6 persons	6 months	1,080	4,088 L
6 persons	1 year	2,190	8,289 L

Long-duration reality: One person for one year equals about 365 gallons / 1,382 L. Four people would equal about 1,460 gallons / 5,527 L. For most households that is not practical to store. Combine a safe stored reserve with a realistic, locally appropriate way to collect, transport, filter, boil, or otherwise treat water according to public-health guidance.

Food Planning - Use Person-Days, Not One Universal Menu

Food needs vary by age, health, climate, activity, culture, allergies, pregnancy, and what can actually be cooked with available fuel and water. A globally useful way to plan is by **person-days**: one person supplied for one day. If you normally eat three meals, multiply person-days by three for meal-equivalents.

Household	Period	Person-days	Meal-equivalents (3/day)
1 person	1 week	7	21
1 person	2 weeks	14	42
1 person	1 month	30	90
1 person	3 months	90	270
1 person	6 months	180	540
1 person	1 year	365	1,095
2 persons	1 week	14	42
2 persons	2 weeks	28	84
2 persons	1 month	60	180
2 persons	3 months	180	540
2 persons	6 months	360	1,080
2 persons	1 year	730	2,190
4 persons	1 week	28	84
4 persons	2 weeks	56	168
4 persons	1 month	120	360
4 persons	3 months	360	1,080
4 persons	6 months	720	2,160
4 persons	1 year	1,460	4,380
6 persons	1 week	42	126
6 persons	2 weeks	84	252
6 persons	1 month	180	540
6 persons	3 months	540	1,620
6 persons	6 months	1,080	3,240
6 persons	1 year	2,190	6,570

Build each person-day from locally available foods: staple carbohydrate (rice, maize/cornmeal, millet, sorghum, cassava, oats, pasta/noodles, potatoes or another staple); protein (beans, lentils, peas, canned fish/meat, nuts/seeds, shelf-stable dairy or local alternative); vegetables/fruit (canned, dried, preserved, or shelf-stable local produce); cooking fat; salt/seasoning; and small comfort foods where affordable.

Choose foods your household already eats. Favor foods that need little water or fuel when utilities may be limited. Rotate oils, nut butters and other higher-fat foods more often because they can become rancid sooner than dry grains and sugar/salt.

Household Supply Targets by Timeframe

Category	1 week	1 month	3+ months / long duration
Water	Stored reserve + safe containers	Stored reserve + reliable treatment / collection plan	Redundant collection, treatment, transport and storage methods
Food	7 person-days each	30 person-days each	Rotate staples; add gardening or food-production options where practical
Medicines	Routine supply on hand where lawful	Plan refill continuity; Red Cross suggests 1 month when possible	Plan legal refill access, alternatives, cold-chain needs and a written medication list
Sanitation	Soap, toilet method, bags and personal hygiene needs	Replacement stock + cleaning supplies	Repairable / reusable options and a safe waste-management plan
Light / Power	Primary light + backup	Spare batteries / charging + second light	Multiple independent methods; protect batteries from heat and moisture
Cooking	Safe basic method + pot	Fuel plan sized to normal foods	Lower-fuel recipes, alternate safe method, fuel rotation and safe storage
Information	Contacts, maps and radio	Printed references + backup radio / power	Multiple ways to receive local information; maintain paper copies

Quick Household Formula

- Water planning math: household size x days x 1 gallon (3.8 L).
- Food planning math: household size x days = person-days of food.
- Meal-equivalent planning: person-days x meals normally eaten per day.
- Always add household-specific needs: infants, pregnancy, older adults, disabilities, allergies, medical diets, pets/service animals, and climate.
- Do not buy everything at once if money is tight. Add a few shelf-stable foods, water containers, hygiene items, batteries, first-aid items, or other basics during normal shopping and rotate what you use.