

PEP—Prioritized Emergency Preparedness—Checklist #1: Budget Water & Food

Find PEP Checklists #2 & #3—Home, and Go Bags & Pets [here](#).

Why use a budget list? *For adequate hydration & nutrition at a minimum of ~ \$175/person/week. Be ready for an emergency with a basic water & food stash. You can always improve it later.*

A. Water Storage Criteria

- Focus first on water. We survive only 3 days without water, but 3 weeks without food.
- Prioritize drinking over washing & cooking.
- FEMA says one adult’s water intake should be .5 gal/day for average activity levels. Active people, pregnant & nursing women, invalids, & children need more. Everyone will be more active after an emergency. Injury & climate are other considerations. Most people haven’t practiced rationing.
- Careful water use for drinking, wounds, cooking, & washing can total 1-2 gallons of water per person per day. This checklist recommends storing 2 gallons/person/day or 14 gallons per person per week.
- Combine bulk & small containers to total 14 gallons, taking the following into account.
- Consider the weight of water, your strength, & how to safely move bulk containers to access & refill.
- Water stored out of sunlight & freezing temps in opaque containers will minimize risk of bacteria & leaks. Containers that stack when full can fit more water safely in small storage spaces.
- Buy bulk containers that are BPA-free & food-grade. HDPE with 2 in a triangle indicates food-grade.
- Plastics in disposable water bottles start to break down in 6-24 months. Bulk containers last longer.
- For small containers, choose plain water or sparkling unflavored/unsweetened water like Spindrift, Bubble, LaCroix. Artificial sweetener will go bad & can be unhealthy.
- Plastic containers can give a strong taste to the water in time. People who aren’t willing to drink it risk dehydration (especially children).
- To deter bacteria, refresh & treat as needed, with a [chlorine-based](#) or a [non chlorine-based preservative](#).

B. Water Storage Strategies for Drinking, Cooking, & Cleaning for 1 Person for 1 Week

- Two 5-gallon, food-grade, light-proof containers for 10 gallons of bulk water, AND
- A combination of small containers holding 4 gallons, in cans, small, & large bottles.
 - Find a bulk container with a spigot & a small footprint that when full, stacks, & you can lift.
 - Cans stack well, share well, & contents last longer than bottles, without taste.
 - Thick, clear 2-liter bottles last longer than thin, 16 oz (.5 liter) bottles or milk jug plastic.
 - Multiple containers limit contamination & total loss from a leak, & help you be mobile.

Container	Storage + post expiry	Quantity	Cost/Gal	Full Lifting Weight
Case of cans	24 months + 9	3 cases = 2 gallons	\$8	6 lbs per case
16-oz bottles	18 months + 6	1 case = 3 gallons	\$2.00	25 lbs per case
2-liter bottles	18 months + 6	1 bottle = 0.5 gallon	\$4.00	4 lbs per bottle
5-gal Samson Stacker	6 months - CDC guidelines ~5 years w treatment above	5 gallons	\$5.00 once	42 lbs

C. Food Storage Criteria & Strategies

- **Food for 1 for a week that's easily portable in 1 food-grade container.**
- **Does not require cooking.** The main checklist suggestions below are precooked & dried before being sold, so they are safe to eat without cooking again. You may prefer them hot, but in an emergency, you can choose to save water & energy, & eat them as they are.
- **Can be purchased over time, spending about \$20 per month.**
- **Staples you & your family will eat.** The food shouldn't be so tasty that you eat it all quickly before or during an emergency. Budget to spend more for options for people with allergies.
- **Easy to store safe from pets & bugs with no refrigeration, & expiry dates as far out as possible.**
- **Easy to clean after use.** Does not leave smelly or hard-to-clean garbage.
- **Good enough with no waste.** This diet is boring while generally meeting nutritional guidelines for protein, fat, & calories. You can improve it when you have time & money for other choices. Mixing emergency food & everyday food helps meet emergency goals without buying all at once.

D. Storing & Rotating the Water & Food

- **Make a platform of 2 cases of cans side by side. Put the big water container on top with the lid pointing up.** To rotate cans or open the spigot safely without lifting a full container, put another case of cans in front or beside. Roll the container onto it so the spigot is in position to fill a bottle.
- **Put the food you'll use in the next month in your kitchen. Put the rest into the bucket.**
- **Make a list of when water & food in bucket or kitchen expire. Flag expiry months on a calendar.**
- **Two strategies** to rotating emergency food to reduce waste & costs over time:
 - "Small stock" is cheapest, but you have to rotate food often.
 - "Big stock" lets you build up a long-term supply, & rotate items before expiry.
- For the "small stock" plan, when you finish an item from the kitchen emergency food, buy a replacement, put it in the bucket, & move the old bucket item to your kitchen.
- For the "big stock" plan, keep an eating list in your kitchen (on the fridge or near your shopping list). When you finish an item from the kitchen emergency food, make a note on the list & buy another. You'll rotate the bucket item in the next step.
- **Restock every 3-6 months.** You only need to do this twice a year, but it can be cheapest to do quarterly, near big holidays. On sale, 3-month quantities avoid a 6-month expense.
 - **If you're on the "big stock" plan, check the eating list** to see how much you buy each quarter. Buy a quarter's worth with no fear of waste & rotate the bucket stock.
 - **If you haven't bought a food item in the last quarter, look at the expiration list.** Decide if you want to give it away & buy new, or put it in the kitchen to eat soon.
 - **Rotate part of the bottled & canned water.** You can bring water to a party & replace.
 - **If an item expires before the next quarter's rotation,** decide if you want to give it away & buy new, or move it to your kitchen to eat now.
 - Check rotating stock frequently.

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WATER—~\$70-\$162

- **Two 5-gal Samson Stackers:** ~\$33-\$65 ea, [Amazon](#), depending on quantity & accessories. Add [modified caps](#) to wrench & spigot. Samson Stackers can be stacked two- to three-high when full.
- **Plus 4 gals in small containers—cans, small & large bottles:** ~\$4-\$32

FOOD STORAGE & TOOLS—~22\$-\$25. Available at hardware stores such as Lowes & Home Depot.

- **1 Food-grade 5-gallon bucket:** for ~\$9. Look for [food-grade identifiers](#).
 - Low cost or free on Craigslist or at delis, cafeterias, groceries. Get one never used for strong or artificial flavors (like vanilla cake icing). Ones used for oily food are safe but hard to clean.
- **1 Food-grade bucket lid:** for ~\$11. Look for [food-grade identifiers](#).
 - Most deli lids are recycled before the bucket's empty, or are damaged in opening.
 - [A simple one](#) costs ~\$3 but needs grip [strength](#). A 2-part, food-grade, [screw-on lid](#) is \$11.
- **Can Opener:** ~\$5 for 2
 - Tape an [Army Surplus P51](#) to the bottom of the bucket lid, or buy cans with pull rings.
- **Bags to hold your food supplies:** ~\$1.25
 - Dollar Store Ziplocs, heavy vacuum sealing bags + heat sealer, or [Clip•n•Seal](#) bags.
- **Bowls & spoons:** Optional
 - Add a couple disposable or spare bowls (or more Ziplocs), & plastic or metal spoons.

FOOD—~\$80

- **Oatmeal, 14 - 15 pounds:** for ~\$20
 - This provides ~56-60 one-cup bowls of 300 calories each, or 7-8 days of all calories & half the protein required. It's bland enough to work with any other food you have.
 - Coupons, generic, bulk bin, [bulk buy](#), discounts, & 25- or 50-lb bags can lower cost up to half.
- **Peanut butter, two 18-oz jars:** for ~\$10
 - 9 Tbsp/day provides the fat & half your emergency diet's protein, with fullness & flavor.
 - It doesn't go bad at room temperature & comes in a resealable container.
- **Canned pumpkin, 4 cans (2 for the bucket; 2 for the pantry):** for ~\$10
 - Cooked, stable-flavored vegetable for dietary variety, color, moisture, & potassium.
 - Purchase after Thanksgiving, if possible, at 1/2 price with the longest expiration date.
- **Sports drink powder** Gatorade, Pedialyte powder, or [Oral Rehydration Salts](#): for ~\$10
 - Important for rehydrating sick people, & adds sugar, salt, & flavor.
- **Coffee, 6 cups of [instant espresso](#) coffee:** for ~\$2
 - If you don't drink coffee, you may still be around people who get caffeine headaches.
- **Sauce, 2 bottles of your favorite salsa or chili, etc.:** for ~\$10
 - Flavor makes boring food taste better. Too spicy or salty will make you want more water.
- **instant ramen, 4 packs:** for ~\$4
 - For variety, & portability.
- **Jam or honey, 1 jar:** for ~\$5
 - Shelf-stable source of energy & flavor in your oats.
- **Jerky & protein bars:** ~\$10 worth
 - For variety, chewiness, portability, & their popularity.