

Basic Emergency Supplies

Emergency supplies fall into four simple categories—food, water, first aid and daily survival equipment. While there are many different ways to set-up a comprehensive emergency kit if you can master these four basic areas you will be well prepared. The following checklist is in two parts. The first part is a straightforward listing of what's needed; the second half is an in-depth look with even more ideas and explanations.

(1) WATER is a basic necessity for life. While you can go without food for several days you cannot last very long without water. A daily minimum of 4 liters of water—per person—should be stored; 2 liters for drinking and 2 for cooking. At the very least you should have a 3-day supply of water for everyone in your household, including pets.

(2) FOOD should also be at least a 3-day supply. None of your emergency food items should require refrigeration or extensive cooking.

(3) FIRST AID kits are available from pharmacies. Such kits should be augmented with aspirin, pain relievers, stomach medicine, herbal and homeopathic remedies, personal mandatory prescriptions, etc. We now offer an Essential Naturopathic First Aid Kit at the Centre. Call us for more details at 416.604.8240.

(4) The most basic EMERGENCY EQUIPMENT includes: flashlights (always have extra batteries), camping lanterns, candles, a portable radio (including battery or solar-charged models), can opener, utility knife, utensils, safety matches, duct tape, work gloves and extra cash.

An In-Depth Look:

(1) WATER is an item that can be both stored and purified in event of an emergency. Glass bottles or stainless steel containers are fine. If you do need to use plastic jugs the clear, glass-like plastic bottles are NOT recommended. These containers readily leak highly-toxic bisphenols. Milky-white plastic is much better. Also, store your plastic bottles away from sunlight or any heat sources, remembering to rotate the water every few months.

WATER PURIFICATION during an emergency is a huge issue. There exists a myriad of filters and methods that range from ceramic/charcoal filtration bottles to UV lights and iodine tablets—many of which can be found at any reputable camping store or ordered online. There isn't the space here to even begin to touch on them. Instead, the two most common methods: boiling and bleaching. Boiling involves heating water to a rolling boil and holding it there for a set time. The exact time (depending on what sources you consult) can vary anywhere from 3 to 15 minutes. Rather than take sides on this, the Center for Disease Control in the United States recommends a rolling boil for a full minute will do the job adequately. Bleaching simply requires adding 16 drops per gallon of water, stirring, and then letting the water stand for 30 minutes. Use ONLY regular household bleach—no scented, color-safe or bleaches with added cleaners. Before drinking the chlorine can then be removed using a commonly available charcoal water filter. Chlorine is a toxic chemical!

(2) **FOODS** that are canned, such as chili, soups, salmon, or even vegetable pates can make up a well-stocked emergency pantry. Dry items like quinoa, rice, millet, pasta, instant soups, energy bars, or dried fruits and vegetables--including sprouting seeds--will also work. Always remember to rotate your canned foods once a year and your dried foods every 6 months. Foods that require a great deal of cooking should be avoided. There is actually a whole range of cooking ideas that use a wide-mouthed stainless steel thermos for food preparation. Another technique slow cooks food in highly-insulated pots once the initial heating is done.

(3) **FIRST AID** cannot be stressed enough. Your kit must consist of a lot more than band-aids and alcohol. The Red Cross has put out quite a comprehensive list for making up first aid supplies (see first aid supplies).

(4) **BASIC SURVIVAL EQUIPMENT** can literally save your life or simply make the emergency more bearable. Here are some tips for the tools originally listed plus more things you might not have thought about:

FLASHLIGHTS—if possible, use lithium batteries as they will maintain a much higher charge for longer idle periods than alkaline batteries. Always keep a supply of extra batteries.

CANDLES—Use beeswax candles. They will burn hotter, longer and release far less volatile organic compounds (VOC's) than regular candles.

PORTABLE RADIO—A regular AM/FM radio can also have short wave bands. There are many international broadcasts in English. Again, don't forget to store extra batteries.

CAN OPENER/UTILITY KNIFE/UTENSILS—Very quickly these tools will become an absolute necessity.

SAFETY MATCHES—Also camping, waterproof matches.

CAMPING COOKERS—These come in all shapes and sizes. Stick to the smaller, more portable ones.

DUCT TAPE—The stuff with a million uses. You don't need a whole roll. 15 to 20 feet wrapped around a thermos or stainless steel bottle will work quite nicely.

WORK GLOVES & HAT W/BRIM—Who knows what kind of tasks you might be doing? Do you really want to pick up broken branches or shards of glass with bare hands? Work long hours in the sun without a hat?

EXTRA CASH—You must decide what is practical for you. Consider even including small change and bus tokens.

TOILET PAPER, SOAP, TOOTHPASTE & TOOTHBRUSH—Do you want to be really extra miserable? Also, such necessities as feminine hygiene supplies, baby diapers & wipes should not be overlooked.

DENTAL FLOSS—Fast becoming a popular survival item, dental floss is one of those all-purpose, incredibly strong and very light tools to pack.

CHANGE OF CLOTHES & STURDY FOOTWEAR—Again, don't be totally miserable. Fresh socks and underwear will especially be very welcome.

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS—This is a must. List everyone you should stay in contact with.

MOBILE EMERGENCY KIT—Finally, now that you've put everything together consider this: you may have to leave your home on a moment's notice. You might need something like a backpack of supplies to tide you over until you can make it back home. Obviously you can't take 10 cans of soup and refried beans with you. Energy bars might be more practical. In the end, you might wind up with a miniaturized version of your larger emergency inventory. The mobile supply pack is an absolute necessity.

First Aid Supplies

To learn how to administer basic first aid, consider taking a first aid course and having a first aid manual with the kit. For more information contact your local Red Cross office. Below is a suggested kit from the Red Cross you yourself can make:

- Sterile adhesive bandages in assorted sizes
- Safety pins, Scissors, Tweezers and Needles
- Cleansing agent/soap, baby wipes, alcohol wipes
- Latex gloves (2 pairs)
- Sunscreen
- 2-inch sterile gauze pads (4-6), 4-inch sterile gauze pads (4-6) and Triangular bandages (3)
- Non-prescription drugs (aspirin or other pain reliever, anti-diarrhea medication, antacid and laxative)
- 3-inch sterile roller bandages (3 rolls) and 2-inch sterile roller bandages (3 rolls)
- Tongue depressors (6)
- Tube of petroleum jelly or other lubricant

In addition, consider expanding your First Aid Kit with one of our Essential Naturopathic First Aid Kits that has remedies to cover every scenario from bug bites, sore throat, puncture wounds, food poisoning, injury, black eyes and burns.

There is also a really great book that uses natural remedies for first aid: *Naturopathic First Aid: A Guide to Treating Minor First Aid Conditions with Natural Medicines* by Karen Barnes, ND.