



NO. 01

The 3-Day Family Water Plan

How much water your family needs, how to store it, and how to make it safe. Done in one afternoon.

Water is the first thing to plan for. People can go a long time without food. They cannot go long without water. A storm, a broken water main, or a boil-water notice can shut off safe tap water with little warning.

The good news is that a water plan is simple. You need the right amount, the right containers, and a way to make water safe. You can set it all up in one afternoon.

This guide walks you through each step. Fill in the worksheet, check off the list, and you are done. Prepared, not scared.

How Much Water Your Family Needs

The official rule is easy to remember. Store **1 gallon of water per person, per day**. That gallon covers drinking and basic cleaning, like washing hands and brushing teeth.

- **Minimum goal:** 3 days of water for everyone in your home.
- **Better goal:** 2 weeks of water, if you have the space.
- **Pets:** Plan extra water for each pet. Ask your vet if you are not sure how much.

Some people need more than a gallon a day. Plan extra for:

- Children
- Nursing mothers
- Pregnant women
- Anyone who is sick
- Hot weather, which can double what a person needs

REMEMBER

Do not ration drinking water unless officials tell you to. Drink what you need today. Then look for more.

Your Family Water Worksheet

Take five minutes and work out your own number. Use a pencil so you can update it as your family changes.

Number of people in our home: _____

Number of pets: _____

Step 1: The 3-day goal

1. People $\times$ 1 gallon $\times$ 3 days = _____ gallons
2. Extra for pets (ask your vet): _____ gallons
3. Extra for hot weather, babies, or illness: _____ gallons
4. **Our 3-day total:** _____ gallons

Step 2: The 2-week goal

1. People $\times$ 1 gallon $\times$ 14 days = _____ gallons
2. Extra for pets: _____ gallons
3. Extra for special needs: _____ gallons
4. **Our 2-week total:** _____ gallons

Step 3: What we have now

Water we already have stored: _____ gallons

Gallons we still need: _____ gallons

Here is an example. A family of 4 needs 12 gallons for 3 days. For 2 weeks, they need 56 gallons. That is before adding extra for pets or hot weather.

QUICK TIP

A standard case of 24 half-liter bottles holds about 3 gallons. A family of 4 would need about 4 cases for 3 days.

Choosing the Right Containers

Store-bought bottled water is the safest and easiest choice. Leave it sealed until you need it. Check the date on the package.

If you fill your own containers, pick them with care.

Use these	Skip these
Sealed store-bought bottled water	Glass jars or bottles (they can break)
Food-grade water containers with tight caps	Anything that ever held bleach, soap, or chemicals
Containers with a narrow neck or spout	Containers without a tight lid
Sturdy plastic that will not crack	Thin milk or juice jugs (hard to clean, can leak)

"Food-grade" means the container is made to hold food or drinks. Look for it on the label. Camping and outdoor stores sell water containers in many sizes.

How to clean a container before you fill it

1. Wash it with soap and water. Rinse well.
2. Mix 1 teaspoon of unscented household bleach into 1 quart (4 cups) of water.
3. Pour this into the container. Cap it and shake for at least 30 seconds.
4. Pour it out. Let the container air dry.
5. Fill it with clean tap water. Cap it tightly.

SAFETY

Never mix bleach with ammonia or any other cleaner. It can make harmful fumes.

Where to Store Water and When to Rotate It

Where you keep water matters. Heat and sunlight can break down plastic over time.

- Store water in a cool, dark place. Aim for 50°F to 70°F.

- Keep it out of direct sun.
- Keep it away from gasoline, paint, pesticides, and other chemicals.
- Split it up if you can. Keep some in a closet, some under a bed, some in the pantry.
- Big jugs are heavy. A full gallon weighs a bit over 8 pounds. Store heavy containers low.

Label every container you fill yourself. Write "Drinking Water" and the date you filled it.

When to rotate:

- **Water you bottle yourself:** Replace it every 6 months.
- **Store-bought water:** Watch the date on the package. Use it and replace it before then.

An easy way to remember is to rotate water when you change your clocks in spring and fall. Use the old water for plants or cleaning, then refill.

QUICK TIP

When you use stored water, pour it or use a clean scoop. Do not dip your hands or a cup into the container.

Water Already in Your House

Your home holds more water than you might think. If the taps stop, you may have gallons ready to use. Learn where it is now, before you need it.

Your water heater

A standard tank water heater holds about 30 to 80 gallons. Tankless heaters do not store water, so skip this if you have one.

SAFETY

Turn off the power or gas to the water heater before you drain it. The water inside may be very hot. Let it cool first.

Steps to get water from the tank:

1. **Turn off the heat source.** For an electric heater, flip its breaker off at the panel. For a gas heater, turn the control knob to "pilot" or "off." Follow the label on your heater.
2. **Close the cold water valve.** This is usually a pipe on top of the heater. Turn it clockwise until it stops.
3. **Let air in.** Turn on a hot water faucet somewhere in the house.
4. **Wait for it to cool.** Hot water can scald.
5. **Drain into a clean container.** Open the drain valve near the bottom of the tank. The first water out may have some sediment. Let it settle or strain it.

SAFETY

Do not turn the power or gas back on until the tank is full again. Heating an empty tank can damage it. If you shut off the main gas line to your house, do not turn it back on yourself. Call the gas company.

Your pipes

Water sits in your home's pipes, too. You can use it if your water lines are not contaminated.

1. Shut off the main water valve to your home.
2. Turn on a faucet on the highest floor. This lets air in.
3. Collect water from the lowest faucet in the house.

Do you know where your main water valve is? Find it this week. Make sure every adult in your home can find it too.

Ice cubes

Ice from your freezer counts. It is safe to use once melted, if the water it was made from was safe.

What not to drink

Some water in and around your home is not safe to drink. Do not drink water from:

- Toilet bowls
- Toilet tanks that have cleaner tablets or colored water
- Radiators or boilers

- Waterbeds
- Swimming pools or hot tubs
- Floodwater

Pool water can be used for washing and cleaning, but not for drinking. Many local agencies say to save toilet tank water for flushing.

Boil-Water Notices and Other Water Advisories

Your local water utility or health department may send out a notice about tap water. There are three main kinds. Each means something different.

Notice	What it means	What to do
Boil Water	Germs may be in the water.	Boil tap water before drinking or cooking, or use bottled water.
Do Not Drink	Chemicals or toxins may be in the water.	Use bottled water to drink and cook. Boiling will not help.
Do Not Use	Any contact with tap water may be harmful.	Use bottled water for everything. These are rare.

During a boil-water notice

Use boiled water (cooled) or bottled water for:

- Drinking
- Cooking and washing food
- Brushing teeth
- Making ice
- Mixing baby formula. Ready-to-feed formula is the best choice if you have it.
- Your pets' water bowls

Washing your hands with soap and tap water is usually fine. Check what your local officials say. When bathing, do not swallow the water. Give babies and young children a sponge bath.

Keep following the notice until your water utility says it is lifted. They may also tell you how to flush your pipes afterward.

How to Make Water Safe

If you run low on stored water, you can treat water to kill germs. Start with the clearest water you can find.

If the water is cloudy, clear it first. Let it settle, then pour off the clear water on top. Or strain it through a clean cloth, paper towel, or coffee filter.

Boiling: the best way to kill germs

1. Bring water to a full rolling boil.
2. Keep it boiling for **1 minute**.
3. If you live above 5,000 feet, boil for **3 minutes**.
4. Let it cool on its own.
5. Store it in a clean container with a lid.

Boiled water can taste flat. To fix this, pour it back and forth between two clean containers. You can also let it stand a few hours, or add a pinch of salt per quart.

Unscented household bleach

If you cannot boil water, plain household bleach works. Use only **regular, unscented** bleach. Do not use scented, color-safe, or "splash-less" bleach, or bleach with added cleaners. Check the label for the strength, listed as "sodium hypochlorite."

Bleach strength	Clear water, per gallon	Cloudy water, per gallon
6%	8 drops	16 drops
8.25%	6 drops	12 drops

1. Add the drops to the water. Use a clean dropper.
2. Stir well.
3. Wait at least **30 minutes**.
4. Smell it. It should have a slight bleach smell.

5. If there is no smell, add the same number of drops again. Wait **15 more minutes**.

REMEMBER

Bleach loses strength over time. Use a bottle stored at room temperature and opened less than a year ago. Write the date on the bottle when you open it. If your bleach label has its own water directions, follow the label.

Keep a small, clean medicine dropper with your bleach. Mark it "water only."

Filters and tablets

Portable water filters are handy, but they have limits. Most filters remove bacteria and parasites. **Most filters do not remove viruses.** Only trust a filter for viruses if its package says it removes or kills them. Many of these are sold as "purifiers."

If your filter is not rated for viruses, treat the water after filtering. Use bleach or a water treatment tablet.

Water treatment tablets are sold at camping stores. Follow the package directions exactly. Wait times differ from brand to brand.

SAFETY

Boiling, bleach, and filters will not make water safe if it has fuel, chemicals, or other toxins in it. If you think water has chemicals in it, do not drink it. Use bottled water and call your local health department.

The First Hour: What to Do

When the water stops, or a notice comes in, calm steps help. Here is what to do in the first hour.

If you get a boil-water or other water notice

1. Read the notice closely. Is it Boil Water, Do Not Drink, or Do Not Use?
2. Stop drinking tap water right away. Switch to your stored water.
3. Tell everyone in the house, including kids and older family members.
4. Turn off your fridge's ice maker. Throw out ice made from tap water.

5. Put a note on the kitchen and bathroom sinks. Write "Don't drink" or "Boil first."
6. Start boiling water for the next day, if the notice allows it.
7. Check your utility or local officials for updates.

If the water just stops

1. Check with neighbors, your water utility, or local news. Find out what happened.
2. Do not drink tap water when it comes back until officials say it is safe.
3. If officials tell you to, shut off your main water valve. This keeps dirty water out of your pipes.
4. Count your stored water. Figure out how many days it will last.
5. Save water. Use paper plates. Use hand sanitizer for quick hand cleaning when hands are not visibly dirty.
6. Plan which hidden water to use first, like the water heater or pipes.

If you know an outage may be coming

A storm or a planned repair gives you time. Fill extra clean containers with tap water. You can also fill the bathtub for flushing toilets and cleaning. Treat bathtub water before drinking it.

Your Family's Key Info

Fill this out and keep it on the fridge or with your water.

Our main water valve is located: _____

Our water heater type (electric / gas / tankless): _____

Water heater breaker number or gas control location: _____

Our water utility phone number: _____

Our local health department phone number: _____

Poison Control: 1-800-222-1222

Where our stored water is kept: _____

Date we last rotated our water: _____

Next rotation date: _____

Your One-Afternoon Setup Checklist

Work through this list in one afternoon. Put a check next to each item as you finish it.

Plan

- ☐ Fill in the Family Water Worksheet
- ☐ Write down how many gallons you still need

Get water and supplies

- ☐ Buy sealed bottled water to reach your 3-day total
- ☐ Buy or gather food-grade containers with tight caps (optional)
- ☐ Buy a bottle of regular, unscented household bleach
- ☐ Write the open date on the bleach bottle
- ☐ Get a clean medicine dropper and mark it "water only"
- ☐ Make sure you have a pot and a way to boil water without power, like a camp stove used outdoors

Fill and store

- ☐ Clean and sanitize any containers you will fill yourself
- ☐ Fill them with tap water and cap them tightly
- ☐ Label each one "Drinking Water" with today's date
- ☐ Store water in a cool, dark place, away from chemicals

Know your house

- ☐ Find your main water shutoff valve
- ☐ Show every adult in the house where it is
- ☐ Find your water heater and note if it is electric, gas, or tankless

- ☐ Find the water heater's breaker or gas control
- ☐ Find the drain valve at the bottom of the water heater
- ☐ Fill out the Family Key Info page

Keep it going

- ☐ Put a reminder on your calendar to rotate water in 6 months
- ☐ Add 1 or 2 cases of water each trip to the store until you reach 2 weeks

QUICK TIP

Never run a camp stove or grill indoors. Use it outside, away from windows and doors.

A CLOSING THOUGHT

Water is a gift we often forget until the tap goes quiet. Faith does not ask us to worry about that day. It asks us to be ready and to care for the people in our home. One afternoon of work can carry your family through days of trouble. Then you can rest, trusting God and knowing you have done your part.

"And the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not." (Isaiah 58:11, KJV)

SOURCES

- Water, Ready.gov: <https://www.ready.gov/water>
- Build A Kit, Ready.gov: <https://www.ready.gov/kit>
- How to Create an Emergency Water Supply, CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/water-emergency/about/how-to-create-and-store-an-emergency-water-supply.html>
- How to Make Water Safe in an Emergency, CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/water-emergency/about/index.html>

- How to Find Clean Water in an Emergency, CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/water-emergency/about/how-to-find-clean-water-in-an-emergency.html>
- Drinking Water Advisories: An Overview, CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/water-emergency/about/drinking-water-advisories-an-overview.html>
- Emergency Disinfection of Drinking Water, U.S. EPA: <https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/emergency-disinfection-drinking-water>
- FAQ: Where can I find clean drinking water after a disaster?, FEMA: <https://www.fema.gov/node/what-are-emergency-water-sources-if-im-running-out-clean-water>
- Emergency Drinking Water: Hidden Water Sources in Your Home, Alameda County: <https://www.acgov.org/ready/documents/EmergencyDrinkingWaterHandout.pdf>
- Emergency Water Sources, Regional Water Providers Consortium: <https://www.regionalh2o.org/emergency-preparedness/emergency-water-sources>
- Other Sources of Water, Be Ready Utah: <https://beready.utah.gov/?p=3669>
- How to Safely Clean and Sanitize with Bleach, CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/natural-disasters/safety/how-to-safely-clean-and-sanitize-with-bleach.html>
- Isaiah 58:11 (KJV), Bible Gateway: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+58%3A11&version=KJV>

General information for household preparedness only. It is not medical, legal, or professional advice. Always follow your local officials and emergency services. In an emergency, call 911.

WHAT COMES NEXT

This is one piece of the plan. The book is the whole thing.

You just made your family a little more ready. Nice work. That feeling of calm you get from checking one thing off the list is the whole point.

A Quiet Protector walks your family through the rest, one short lesson at a time: water, food, power, first aid, staying in touch, and leaving home if you ever have to. Plain words. Clear steps. No fear.

A QUIET PROTECTOR

The household readiness book for families who believe faith and action go together.

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FIRST LIGHT BRIEF

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