

# Building Your Emergency Kit



In the event of a major emergency, you may need to survive on your own for several days. A good place to start may be just selecting a bag or container for your kit. Even if you don't have the time or money to purchase all the items at once for an emergency kit, you can start with a bag or bin and a list of items you will need to add. If feasible, consider purchasing a container for home, work, and the car. Once you build the kit(s), remember to replace expired items and keep them in a dry, cool place.

Your emergency kit should have prescription medication and glasses along with copies of important documents, paper and pencil, cash, and change. Consider a charged battery pack for your cell phone, a battery powered and/or hand crank NOAA weather radio, and a small fire extinguisher.

Your kit should include a flashlight and extra batteries, a first aid kit, moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties. Include any feminine supplies, soap, and personal hygiene items. Pack at least one change of clothes, with additional clothing if you live in a cold-weather environment. You should have a warm blanket or sleeping bag for each person. If you have infants, remember to include formula and diapers. If you have pets, include food, water, and supplies for them.

You should have enough non-perishable food (and a can opener, if needed) and water (one gallon per person, per day) for several days. It may also be helpful to include matches in a waterproof container. A whistle can be used to signal for help over longer distances. Consider adding a local map in the event you need to travel and electronic devices are not working.

While you might be tempted to add candles to your kit, this is the most common source of fire during emergency events; flashlights and electric lanterns may be a better option. Duct tape can be useful to seal cracks when air is contaminated and you need to shelter in place. Consider a dust mask as well. A wrench or pliers might be helpful to turn off utilities.

Building an emergency kit should be a process, rather than a "one and done" activity. While there are many gadgets and cool items that are marketed for survival, clean drinking water should always be at the top of the list for an emergency kit. The CDC recommends, in a dire emergency, using 8 drops of household bleach (with 5%–9% concentration of sodium hypochlorite) per gallon of water.

[The American Red Cross](#) offers a detailed list of materials that should be kept in an emergency kit, as does [FEMA's Be Ready](#) program.

