

2. Food. Think about a 3-month “working pantry”. A working pantry is a pantry that you eat and cook out of all the time. When you use something, you simply replace it. The way to get started is to list all the things that your family normally eats. Don’t stock things you or your family will never eat as that is a waste of money. Do some math and figure out how much of an individual item you would use/eat in one month. For example, if you use one can or one box of something every week, then you would need 4 of those for the month. Slowly, as your finances permit, build that item to your full month supply and simply replace it when you use it. After a while, build toward your 2, then 3-month pantry over time when you have extra money or as items/products go on sale. This takes a bit of discipline, but it pays off in the long run as you will always have food on hand. You will never be standing in lines in the supermarket during a crisis.

Let’s talk staples, what exactly are staples? Staples are a must. These are basic food items, usually dry goods, that are needed to make everything else you have work for you. They can be used separately or in conjunction with most everything else for survival. These would include: Flour, Corn Meal, Rice, Pasta, Sugar, Salt, Spices, Rolled Oats, Baking Powder, Baking Soda, Dried Beans, Dried Peas, Lentils, Popcorn, Oils, Vinegar, Honey, Mayonnaise, Mustard, Nut Butters, Herbs/Spices, Powdered/Canned Milk and Canned goods (i.e. vegetables, fruit and meat). Wet goods would include (would need refrigeration) fresh milk, eggs, butter, yogurt, cheese and fresh/frozen vegetables and meat. You can see that, except for the wet foods, most of the fore-mentioned foods will last a long time if stored appropriately and rotated. Again, remember, with a working pantry, you are not hoarding this food, you are using it and replacing it.

Please include household/personal products to your list as well, such as pet food, cleaning supplies, detergent, toilet tissue, paper towels, facial tissue, disinfectant wipes, hand sanitizer, bar soap, liquid hand soap, shampoo, deodorant, feminine hygiene products, disposable diapers, a first aid kit and over the counter medications. You should never have to run, in a mad dash, to the store in a crisis. You can collect these things over time, as you can afford it or when you catch them on sale. We all must make this a priority because, as we have discovered, it can happen at any time.

3. Water. We can live a lot longer without food than we can without water. This MUST be a huge priority. You must prepare for one gallon of water, per person, per day. This includes drinking and simple basic hygiene (if the water goes off). You can do this by saving water in the blue 5-gallon jugs that can be purchased at any home improvement store and storing them in a safe place. These jugs can be refilled and last for many years. Buying cases of bottled water may not be cost effective over time, so

gallon jugs may be less expensive. We also must think about waste management in a crisis as well during these times.

4. Shelter. What is the plan? Explore these questions, at your family conference:

- a) What if we must evacuate (hurricane, flooding, etc.)? What will we carry with us and where will we go? Is our vehicle dependable? Do we keep the tank full? Do we have emergency money? What about the pets?
- b) If we “must shelter in place” i.e. epidemic/pandemic, what else will we need if we cannot leave the house or yard? Do we have a working, stocked pantry?
- c) What will we need to meet our physical/medical needs? Is a family member on prescription medications? How will we get more medication, if we need it? Do we need our medical records and immunizations records?
- d) Do you have elderly family members? What is the plan for them?
- e) Are we prepared to be without electricity, water, electronics, trash removal? What will we do to pass the time? Will we be warm or cool enough?
- f) Do we need to organize our legal documents, wills, passports, insurance policies (self and property), insurance cards, records, etc.?

As you can see, there is a lot to think about and there is no way to cover all aspects of preparing for a crisis or disaster here. There have been many books written on the subject so I would recommend further reading on the subject. I hope this introduction to preparation and the importance in getting your entire family involved is helpful.

Please be prepared, be smart, be educated, be calm and stay well!!!

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