Water
GETTING STARTED

Why This is Important

1. Water is our most essential nutrient. People can survive days or weeks without food, but only about four days without water. The body uses water for digestion, absorption, circulation, transporting nutrients, building tissue, carrying away waste and maintaining body temperature.

2. Most households have water provided and treated by plants providing clean, non-contaminated drinking water. In the event of a pandemic, essential services such as water treatment may be interrupted for several reasons:

- Absenteeism of plant employees due to illness or fear
- Lack of electricity to run the plants
- Lack of products necessary to treat the water due to ill truck drivers or manufacturing plant workers.

How Much Water Should You Store?

Plan on having at least 1 gallon of water per person PER DAY on hand. Most people need 2 quarts of water per day for drinking. The other 2 quarts in the gallon per day are for cooking, bathing and cleaning. Don't forget your pets. A small pet can drink one quart of water per day.

A large supply of stored water is bulky and not practical for everyone. One gallon of water weighs about 8 ½ pounds. Many local pandemic flu plans have water system restoration as a top priority, although water may not be purified. If you cannot store three months of drinking water, do these two things:

- Store AT LEAST 2 weeks water. That's the bare minimum and you should do it today! Store at least 4 weeks if you have infants, elderly, or immune-compromised household members.

- Get the next best thing – **capability**. This could mean:

   1. Collapsible containers - to be filled after pandemic flu begins, before water service is degraded
   2. Water purification filters - to remove microorganisms from potentially contaminated water

Of the two, water purification capability is the most important. Good drinking water will be needed during and between each pandemic wave.

Storage

- **Start NOW**. If you use bottled water, get extra when you shop. Food grade plastic or glass containers are suitable for storing water. Thoroughly rinse and clean your containers and fill them up. Tap water is fine, unless there are restrictions from the health district.

- **Cautions:**

  1. Do not use empty milk jugs. Bacteria in milk can become lodged in the plastic of the jug. Additionally, the plastic is too thin to last more than a few months before leaking or breaking.

  2. Do not store your water near gasoline, kerosene, pesticides or similar substances

  3. Water is heavy - a 55 gallon barrel weighs about 460 pounds. Store your water where its weight is adequately supported. Basements and garage floors are great.

- Clearly label all drinking water containers "drinking water" with the current date. Store the water in a cool, dry place away from direct sunlight and heat sources.

- If you have a pool, you have a water source for cleaning and bathing but **NOT** for drinking. Water in swimming pools is chlorinated, but it also contains chemicals that can make it unsafe to drink. Therefore, the EPA does NOT recommend drinking it.

- Water storage containers come in many shapes and sizes. You can purchase new 5-6 gallon plastic containers designed for water. For small spaces, consider storing foldable or collapsible water tanks which can be filled after a pandemic begins, and before utility services degrade or fail.

Collapsible Water Containers

- If you have the room, consider purchasing large plastic drums. Make sure they are food grade containers.

Water Barrels/Drums

- Also consider the small 'kiddie' pools that hold several hundred gallons of water. Keep the pool folded in its original box until it is needed. This water will require treatment using steps in the (See: '*Emergency Purification*' section.)

Collapsible Kiddie Pools

- **NOTE:** Properly stored water does NOT go bad. However, it may taste stale. To improve the taste, just pour your water from one container into another one. Do this several times.

Photo: Courtesy EPA