

# Emergency Preparedness: Water Storage

Martha Archuleta, PhD, RD

Extension Food and Nutrition Specialist

New Mexico State University

# How much water should be stored?

- At least a 3-day supply.
- One gallon per day per person for drinking and food preparation.
- Additional gallon per day per person for hygiene and washing dishes.

# Water Storage Containers

- Use only food grade containers.
- One, three and five gallon containers can be purchased from hardware or outdoor stores.
- Can use containers that previously held food or beverages if thoroughly cleaned.
- Never use containers that have held chemicals.

# Cleaning Containers for Water Storage

- Clean containers and lids with hot soapy water.
- Carefully clean hard-to-reach places such as handles of milk jugs.
- Rinse well with clean water.
- Sanitize.

# Sanitizing Cleaned Water Storage Containers

- Rinse containers and lids with 1 tablespoon household bleach per gallon of water.
- Leave containers wet for two minutes.
- Let air dry or rinse with clean water.

# Treating Water for Storage

- Fill clean, sanitized containers with potable (safe) drinking water.
- Add 4 drops of household bleach per quart of water (or 2 scant teaspoons per 10 gallons).
- Use only bleach that contains 5.25% hypochlorite and is without any fresheners, scents, etc.

# Where to Store Water

- Store water containers in cool, dry place.
- Do not store near gasoline, kerosene, pesticides or other chemicals.
- Shelf life is indefinite, but good idea to replace every 6 months.
- Can store some water in freezer.

# Emergency Water Sources

- Hot water heater- Turn off, let water cool, drain from bottom valve.
- Reservoir tank of toilet (not the bowl).
- For either of these sources, add 2 drops of bleach per quart of water (or 1/8 teaspoon bleach per gallon of water) and let stand for 30 minutes before using.

# Purifying Water During an Emergency

- Boil water for 3-5 minutes at a rolling boil.
- Add 2 drops bleach per quart of water (or 1/8 teaspoon bleach per gallon of water), stir and let stand for 30 minutes. If water does not taste and smell of chlorine at that point, add another dose and let stand another 15 minutes.

# Information Sources:

- Emergency Food and Water Supplies: Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)  
<http://www.fema.gov/library/emfdwtr.shtm>
- Water Storage: Colorado State University  
<http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/emergency/water.html>
- Water Storage: Utah State University
  - <http://extension.usu.edu/publica/foodpubs/watersto.htm>