

72-Hour Kit: What Food To Pack

Your 72-hour kit should contain everything you need to keep you alive for three days.

If you're facing a short-term emergency, lose power, or need to bug-out, your kit will help keep you going while you wait for a rescue or get yourself where you need to be.

Ideally you take time to prepare a kit for each member of your family. This distributes the weight of the supplies and ensures everyone has what they need individually. You want your kits to be light-weight, self-contained in a portable bag, bucket, or pack, and ready to go whenever a need arises.

Food is an essential part of your 72-hour kit. You need to eat to keep your strength up during emergencies. But with so many different types of food available, how do you know what to put in your kit?

The best food for your emergency bag meets the following criteria:

- Lightweight
- Nutritious and calorie dense (at least mostly!)
- Compact
- Easy to prepare with no cooking or heating necessary
- Something you can stomach



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Burn It Immediately!**

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The food in your 72-hour kit doesn't need to be a culinary

delight to your taste buds. Compared to what you're used to eating, it'll probably fall short.

But, don't pack something you despise. You don't want to have to force yourself to eat your emergency rations on top of all the other stress you'll be dealing with. This is especially true if you're packing kits for children. You want to know that everyone will eat without a huge fuss.

Why I Select No-Cook Food

You can opt to put food that needs cooked or heated in your 72-hour kits, but I don't.

Instead, I pick food that can be eaten as is, straight from the package.

The biggest reason is to cut weight. If you need to heat the food, you also need a safe way to heat it. You'll also need a container for heating it in, like a pan. And most food that needs heated requires water. Water weighs a lot, so carrying extra just to make food hot seems like a waste.

If you're sheltering in place with your 72-hour kit, feel free to store extra water in the house and make plans for hot meals. I have some hot-options to cook on the top of my wood stove when necessary. But, when it's time to grab the bags and leave, I don't want the weight dragging any of us down.

Rotate the Food in Your 72-Hour Kit

I purposefully didn't select long-term storage food to put in my 72-hour kits. I wanted it to be food that my family was used to, and we could easily rotate.

To save money, I bought or purchased some items in bulk. Then I bagged them into snack or sandwich sized zip-style bags. This was much cheaper than buying individually packaged items

and allowed me to better control the portion sizes appropriate for each family member.

I plan on us rotating the food about every six months, though most would be fine going a full year. To use the food, I take the food kits along with us on a car trip.

It's also perfect to take along on a hike, or while camping. You can even use it for snacks after ball practice or something.

Whenever you take food out, make sure you replace it. Then your kits will always be ready.

Here are some of the foods I include in my kits. They aren't fancy, but they will keep my family going in an emergency.

Food for Breakfast

Don't skip breakfast! In an emergency, you may need to walk to seek rescue. Or do other physically strenuous activities.

Your body needs fuel to make that happen, so start the morning with a calorie dense compact meal. Mix and match the following items.

- **Breakfast Biscuits:** They come in a variety of flavors, so see which ones you and your family think are best. Each individual package contains four crackers, which you can spread out a bit throughout the morning. They also hold up well to packing, because even if they break they still taste good!
- **Bags full of Dry Granola:** I make my own granola mix and put it in zip-top bags. You can also buy granola and then bag it up. For maximum nutrition, you want granola with a good mix of oats, nuts/seeds, and dried fruit.
- **Breakfast Cookies:** Starting the day off with a nutritious cookie? Yes please! The cookies seem like a treat which can help make the situation seem less scary.

- **Shelf Stable Protein Shake:** Everyone needs a good amount of protein, and this is an easy way to get it. However, these tend to be one of the higher priced items in the food part of the 72-hour kits, so I only buy enough for one for everyone. Brands and flavors vary greatly, so try at least one before you buy a larger pack.
- **Soft Granola Bars:** I go with store-brand for these to save some money and pick up a variety.
- **A bag of nuts:** You can buy individually packages or buy nuts and bulk and bag them yourself.

Food for Lunch

Here are some of the best foods for lunch for your 72-hour kits. Mix and match them according to taste preferences.

- **Peanut butter in “To-Go” style packaging:** Pair this with some animal crackers for dipping for a good source of protein if you aren’t dealing with peanut allergies.
- **Crackers:** From animal crackers to whole-grain woven ones, I typically put several crackers in each 72-hour kit. These make a quick snack, or addition to any meal.
- **Dehydrated Meat:** Beef jerky and shelf-stable pepperoni style sticks are my choice of meat, but you can find plenty to choose from. You could even make yourself some pemmican.
- **Bags of Trail Mix:** A good one for eating on the go, you can find several styles of trail mix. My favorite is one with nuts, fruits, and a bit of chocolate.
- **[Dehydrated Fruit](#) and Veggies:** Your body needs nutrients from fruits and vegetables. Dehydrating a variety is a good way to make them portable. You can also go with fruit leather if you prefer.

Food for Dinner

Simple dinners with some protein are my goal. Make sure you are accounting for appetite differences when packing these. I pack more food for the adults and teens in my family than I do for the younger children. Try these foods for your 72-hour kit dinners.

- **Tuna and Crackers:** You can buy these packs ready-made, or just get a can of tuna and crackers. If you pack a can, you will need a can opener. Throwing in some shelf-stable mayonnaise packets can help improve the flavor.
- **Protein Bars:** A little heartier than plain old granola bars, protein bars are a good choice for dinner.
- **Shelf-Stable Meat:** There are plenty of options for packaged, ready to eat meat. These range from little packs of smoked salmon to a can of chicken spread. Pick up a couple of varieties that sound good and give them a try before stocking up. These typically taste good paired with some crackers.
- **Pretzel sticks with dipposable cheese:** These little packs of pretzels or bread sticks with cheese hold up pretty well to being tossed in a backpack.
- **Squeezable Applesauce Packs:** Applesauce in the little plastic containers with foil on top tend to leak if they're squished. That's why I prefer the squeezable packs.

Food for Snacks

You may need some snacks throughout the day to help increase your calories, or to keep a child from screaming at an inopportune time. You can pack more of any of the foods listed above, or try some from this list to toss in your 72-hour kits:

- **Fruit Snacks:** Though not very nutritious, these are a

good way to boost your blood sugar if needed. They also travel well.

- **Crunchy Style Granola Bars:** These still taste good when broken and come in a ton of flavors.
- **Electrolyte Drops for Your Water:** You need to make sure you have plenty of water for everyone! These drops pack well and add some flavor.
- **Individual sized boxes of cereal:** You'd have to eat these dry, but cereal is enriched with vitamins and minerals.

I used the above foods to complete 72-hour kits for each member of the family. When packing the kits, I stored the food for each day in a gallon-sized zip style bag. This helps with rationing, so the food lasts for the whole three days.

Inside each bag, you can pack each meal into quart-sized bags. You can even use a marker to label everything (ie: Breakfast Day 1, Lunch Day 2, etc.). This preparation now will help keep you from having to really think about what to eat when you're in the middle of an emergency.

What are your favorite foods to add to a 72-hour kit? I'd love to hear your ideas in the comments below.



**Do you recognize this Tree?
(All Parts are edible)**

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