

# DISASTER



Cooperative Extension Service  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Helping You Put Knowledge to Work

## Stay Healthy During And After A Disaster

Practicing a healthy lifestyle is one of the most important things you can do to combat physical and emotional stress following a disaster. A healthy body copes better than an unhealthy one - both physically and mentally.

### What You Eat Is Important

- More than ever, eating a variety of foods is important. The new Food Guide Pyramid is an excellent guide to good eating. By applying the guide to your diet, you can greatly increase your odds of getting all the necessary nutrients.
- If you lead a sedentary lifestyle, exercise at least three times a week for at least 30 minutes per session. Don't overdo it, however. Take one or two days off each week to allow the body to recuperate. People who exercise every day are more prone to injuries.
- Find an exercise activity that fits into your schedule and is fun for you. Check with your physician to determine what kinds of exercise are right for you. Walking is one of the safest and most enjoyable forms of exercise for many people.




Issued by Robert L. Reber, Extension specialist in Nutrition.  
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- Some foods may not be available after a disaster. Substitute nutritionally similar foods, when possible. For example, when necessary, drink powdered milk instead of fresh milk, or canned fruits instead of fresh fruits.
- If you are more physically active during and following a disaster, you'll need more food calories. Starchy foods, such as breads, cereals, pastas and vegetables are excellent sources of additional energy. Whole-grain breakfast cereal and milk is good at any time of day - not just at breakfast.
- Make snacks count. Make sure they supply nutrients in addition to calories.
- Guard against dehydration. Drink plenty of fluids - especially water. If you are physically active, you may need more fluids. Keep in mind that thirst is not always an accurate indicator of the need for fluids. You can lose enough water to impair your performance and still not feel thirsty.

### Physical Activity Is Essential To Good Health

- Regular physical activity is a must, especially during times of stress. While many persons are very active during and after disasters, others may become less active. Healthy levels of physical activity keep a person feeling better, looking better, and more able to cope with stress.

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3