

Family & Consumer Focus

Spring 2009

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Prepare Your Family for Disaster

Lois Smith, Extension educator, consumer and family economics

Illinois is known to have some wild weather during the spring months. Heavy flooding and tornadoes are not out of the realm of possibility. What has your family done to prepare for a disaster? Here are five important things you should take care of now!

- Get a NOAA Weather Radio. This radio gives you notices from the National Weather Service about bad weather in your community. NOAA weather radios are available at many retail outlets. Program your radio to pick up the closest NWR transmitter.
- Make a family plan. If your family is separated during an emergency, have a plan in place. If the emergency affects just your home, your family could meet at your neighbor's house. If the emergency affects your entire neighborhood, the meeting place could be your church or the closest school. Or, you can identify a friend or relative who lives in another community or state as your call center. In the event of a disaster, all members of the family call that person to check in. Make sure all family members understand the plan and know the phone numbers.
- Put together an emergency kit. Local emergency management services will certainly be out to help when a disaster strikes. But, if it's widespread, they may not get to your family for several days. Emergency officials say that we should be prepared to take care of our own family for at least 72 hours. At the very least, you'll need food, water, medicines, and blankets for your family. Make sure you have sturdy shoes and a flashlight handy. Put an emergency kit in your car as well.
- Get some first-aid/CPR training. Classes are often offered locally. Everyone in the family should have training. YOU might be the victim and need help!
- Create a household inventory and put it in a safe place with other important family records. It would be hard to remember all the contents in your home, and difficult and time-consuming to replace all your family documents. Keep your household inventory and other valuable papers in a safe place, such as a waterproof, fireproof safe or a safe deposit box.

For more information, get a copy of *Disaster Preparedness and Recovery* from your local U of I Extension office.



Be Ready for Power Outages

Martha Winter, Extension educator, nutrition and wellness

Spring storms often result in power outages. And, sometimes, the power is out for an extended period of time. Your best defense in a power outage is to be prepared. Take steps now to make sure you are ready.

Be Prepared

- Have a refrigerator thermometer.
- Find out where you can get dry ice.
- Stock up on non-perishable, ready-to-eat foods that do not have to be cooked or kept cold.

When the Power Goes Out

- Keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible.
- The refrigerator will keep food cold for about 4 hours if it is unopened.
- Refrigerator temperature needs to be 40°F or below for proper storage.

Once the Power is Restored

- Check the temperature inside your refrigerator and freezer.
- If an appliance thermometer was kept in the freezer, check the temperature when the power comes back on. If the freezer thermometer reads 40°F or below, the food is safe and may be refrozen.
- If a thermometer has not been kept in the freezer, check each package of food to determine its safety. You can't rely on appearance or odor. If the food still contains ice crystals or is 40°F or below, it is safe to refreeze or cook.
- Refrigerated food should be safe as long as the power was out for no more than 4 hours. Keep the door closed as much as possible.
- Discard perishable foods such as meat, poultry, fish, eggs, or leftovers that have been above 40°F for two hours or more.

Are Hot Flashes Getting the Best of You?

It may not work for everyone, but in three small studies, this simple breathing exercise helped:

- In comfortable clothing, sit in a quiet room. Do not lie down.
- Inhale slowly and deeply through the nose for 5 seconds. Exhale slowly through pursed lips for 8 seconds. Focus on the breathing. Your belly should expand as you breathe in and contract as you breathe out.
- Repeat for 15 minutes each in the morning and afternoon. You can also do the exercise when you feel a hot flash coming on.

(from Nutrition Action Health Letter, November 2008)

Living Well

- Here's an easy way to cut down on lunchtime fat and calories... Skip the cheese on a sandwich. Any time you add cheese, you up the saturated fat.
- The "American Gut" could account for 30 percent of colon cancer cases, according to an 18-year study that tracked 46,000 men. What can you do? Get off your seat and on your feet; eat less; replace high-calorie food with vegetables, fruits, and lean protein; and, trade in your calorie-filled drinks for water.
- Be aware of how much credit debt you can handle. It shouldn't be more than 15 percent of your monthly take-home pay. Use credit only when it's necessary, and don't use credit to buy what you can't afford.
- Your love of ice cream doesn't have to clog your arteries. Look for a brand that is fat-free and low in calories. Then enjoy in moderation!
- Research confirms that "people need people." Those who have close relationships with others have a lower level of stress and benefit from positive physical and mental health. Take the time to invest in relationships!
- A resilient family is the most important asset you can have. Spend time together biking, cooking, gardening, or doing other things to "connect." Communicate with one another about important decisions and daily plans. Family meetings are a great way to bring your family together.

Don't Become an Isolated Caregiver

Milly Kaiser, Extension educator, family life

Caring for someone with an illness can be challenging and lonely. And when caregivers don't get support early on in the caregiving process, they can easily become isolated. Isolation contributes to feelings of burden and depression, especially when it comes on gradually.



When caregivers are isolated in their roles, several factors can contribute to their overwhelming feelings. One study found that in addition to social isolation, caregivers can be affected by physical, emotional, and financial isolation.

Researchers also found that caregivers who did not get supportive help and knowledge of the caregiving task early on experienced isolation that intensified their burden.

When these comments are made, isolation may be an issue:

- *I never know what eruptive behavior might occur from my spouse, so we stopped eating out.*
- *I feel guilty leaving him behind to go to social events that we used to attend. It's easier to just stay home.*
- *He doesn't want anyone else to take care of him, so I don't ask for help.*
- *We didn't look into assisted living because I don't think we could afford it.*
- *I'm so overwhelmed that I just didn't know where to start in asking for help. And, I really didn't want to concern others.*

If you or someone you know is a caregiver, set limits or boundaries on how much you can do—before you get to “a point of crisis.” Your own physical and emotional health have to be a priority in order for you to be able to take care of your loved one.

The next step is to ask for help and support. Seek help from family and friends, a caregiver support group, and healthcare and service providers. Check with your local Area Agency on Aging for more information about services.

Grilling Secret for Tender Meat

Carol Schlitt,
Extension educator, nutrition and wellness

Grilling lean cuts of meat like chicken breasts and pork chops can be a challenge, even for the most experienced cook.

But, the secret to making grilled meat juicy is simple—brine it before grilling. Brining is the process of soaking meat in a salt-water or seasoned water bath to infuse moisture and flavor.

Brining is not only easy and economical, but it also reduces cooking time.

The main ingredients for a brine are liquid, salt (preferably kosher salt), and some kind of sweetener.

Here's a quick brine that is perfect for moist and flavorful grilled chicken breasts.

Basic Brine for Chicken

¼ cup kosher salt (or 1½ table-
spoons table salt – no iodine)
¼ cup sugar, brown or granulated
8 cups cold water

Place all ingredients in a large plastic bag with 4 chicken breasts, making sure breasts are completely submerged in the brine. Refrigerate at least 30 minutes, but not more than 2 hours. Remove chicken from bag and rinse under cold running water. Pat chicken pieces dry with a paper towel. Chicken is now ready for the grill.

Is Organic Healthier?

JoAn Todd, Extension educator, nutrition and wellness

One of today's grocery store options is whether to buy organic or traditionally grown food.

Organic refers to a method of farming that is environmentally friendly and is an alternative to conventional farming methods. In 2005, the organic food industry had \$14 billion in sales. Predictions are that organic food sales will continue to increase.

Prices may be higher because organic food is produced on a smaller scale, and it may need to be milled or processed separately. There is also an increase in shipping costs from more centralized production in otherwise regional markets. In the case of dairy and eggs, the animal's requirements,

such as the number of animals that can be raised per acre or the breed of animal and its feed conversion ratio, affect the cost.

It is not necessarily true that all organic foods are more nutritious.

Scientific research on organic foods has not been abundant. But, we are starting to see more research that compares traditionally grown foods with the organically grown. Ten new scientific studies have been published since March 2008.

This new research is showing that, on average, organic foods, when compared to conventionally grown foods, rate higher in nutrient content, especially

vitamin and phytochemical content, and are lower in pesticide residues.

However, the government has mandated safety tolerance levels on traditional foods.

If you select organic foods, look for the certification as well as the product label. Be sure you understand what you are buying.

The bottom line is simple. Choose healthy foods for your family. Remember, organic has more to do with the way the food is grown than with the nutrients inside.



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If you need dietary or disability accommodations to participate in any events listed in this newsletter, please contact your local U of I Extension office.