Essential Vitamin & Mineral Supplements for a Crisis

Emergency preparedness card | For adults when fresh food and supply chains are disrupted

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Why supplements matter in a disaster

When food is scarce, deficiency diseases return. Scurvy (vitamin C), beriberi (thiamine), and pellagra (niacin) have re-emerged in emergency-affected populations, and iron, vitamin A, and iodine deficiencies are the most common worldwide.[1]

Core crisis supplements (adults)

Supplement	Crisis dose	Why it matters	Adult daily upper limit
Vitamin B1 (thiamine)	150 mg, 2–3 times a week	Body stores are small and short-lived; deficiency causes beriberi, confusion, weakness, heart failure[2]	None set[2]
Vitamin B12	5,000 mcg, 2–3 times a week	Nerves and red blood cells; only a small share of large oral doses is absorbed[3]	None set[3]
Vitamin C	2,000 mg daily, split into 2 doses	Prevents scurvy; overt deficiency follows weeks of very low intake[4]	2,000 mg[4]
Vitamin D3 (liquid / sublingual)	5,000 IU daily	Bone, muscle, and immune health; less sun exposure when sheltering	4,000 IU; toxicity unlikely below 10,000 IU[5]
Iodine (i-Throid, RCL Labs)	6.25 mg capsule, once a week	Thyroid function; sea, Himalayan, and kosher salts are usually not iodized	1,100 mcg; 6.25 mg weekly averages ~890 mcg/day[6]

Optional foundation: one standard multivitamin/mineral daily helps cover niacin, folate, vitamin A, zinc, and iron.[1,7] If you take one, count its vitamin D, C, B6, and iodine toward the totals above.

Read every label

Stacking a multivitamin with single supplements can push intake above safe limits.[7] Keep total **vitamin B6 at or below 100 mg a day**; long-term high doses can cause nerve damage.[8] Do not double up on iodine, vitamin A, iron, or niacin products.

Check with a doctor first if you: are pregnant or breastfeeding (iodine needs are 220–290 mcg/day; use a prenatal)[6] • are buying for a child (adult doses are not for children) • have kidney disease or kidney stones (vitamins C and D)[4,5] • have thyroid disease such as Hashimoto's or Graves', which raises the risk of iodine side effects.[6] **Stop vitamin D and seek care** for persistent nausea, vomiting, weakness, excessive thirst, or frequent urination.[5]

Not radiation protection: a weekly iodine supplement does not protect the thyroid in a nuclear emergency. Use FDA-approved potassium iodide (130 mg for adults) only when public health officials instruct.[9]

Storage tips

Keep supplements cool, dry, and sealed. Write purchase dates on bottles and rotate stock before expiration. Pack a 30-, 60-, or 90-day supply per person to match your kit.

1. WHO/UNHCR/UNICEF/WFP, Food and Nutrition Needs in Emergencies: iris.who.int/server/api/core/bitstreams/c6f336b9-0c36-4431-80fd-840c05344817/content
2. NIH ODS, Thiamin: ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/Thiamin-HealthProfessional 3. NIH ODS, Vitamin B12: ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/VitaminB12-HealthProfessional
4. NIH ODS, Vitamin C: ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/VitaminC-HealthProfessional 5. NIH ODS, Vitamin D: ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/VitaminD-HealthProfessional
6. NIH ODS, Iodine: ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/Iodine-HealthProfessional 7. NIH ODS, Multivitamin/mineral Supplements: ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/MVMS-HealthProfessional
8. NIH ODS, Vitamin B6: ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/VitaminB6-HealthProfessional 9. FDA, Potassium Iodide FAQ: fda.gov/drugs/bioterrorism-and-drug-preparedness/frequently-asked-questions-potassium-iodide-ki

Crisis doses reflect Dr. Lopez's clinical recommendations for short-term use when testing is unavailable; upper limits are Food and Nutrition Board values for healthy adults. Educational information only; not a substitute for individual medical advice.

Dosing by Age: Adults and Children

Daily recommended amount (RDA) and daily upper limit (UL) by age, from the NIH Office of Dietary Supplements

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Supplement	Ages 1–3	Ages 4–8	Ages 9–13	Ages 14–18	Adults 19+	Adult crisis dose (Dr. Lopez)
Vitamin B1 (thiamine)	0.5 mg UL: none	0.6 mg UL: none	0.9 mg UL: none	M 1.2 / F 1.0 mg UL: none	M 1.2 / F 1.1 mg UL: none	150 mg, 2–3x a week
Vitamin B12	0.9 mcg UL: none	1.2 mcg UL: none	1.8 mcg UL: none	2.4 mcg UL: none	2.4 mcg UL: none	5,000 mcg, 2–3x a week
Vitamin C	15 mg UL: 400 mg	25 mg UL: 650 mg	45 mg UL: 1,200 mg	M 75 / F 65 mg UL: 1,800 mg	M 90 / F 75 mg UL: 2,000 mg	2,000 mg daily, split
Vitamin D3	600 IU UL: 2,500 IU	600 IU UL: 3,000 IU	600 IU UL: 4,000 IU	600 IU UL: 4,000 IU	600 IU (800 if 70+) UL: 4,000 IU	5,000 IU daily
Iodine	90 mcg UL: 200 mcg	90 mcg UL: 300 mcg	120 mcg UL: 600 mcg	150 mcg UL: 900 mcg	150 mcg UL: 1,100 mcg	6.25 mg once a week (~890 mcg/day)

M = male, F = female. UL = most a person should take daily from food and supplements combined. "None" means no upper limit has been set. Sources: NIH ODS fact sheets (refs 2–6).

How to use this table

Children: give a children's multivitamin made for their age group, which supplies about the RDA. **Do not give children the adult crisis doses.** Several adult doses exceed the children's upper limits.

Teens 14–18: use the RDA column for their age. Teens approaching adult size are still limited to 1,800 mg of vitamin C and 900 mcg of iodine a day.

Adults: the crisis column shows Dr. Lopez's short-term regimen for times when testing is unavailable. Vitamin D3 at 5,000 IU is above the 4,000 IU general upper limit, and vitamin C at 2,000 mg is right at the limit.

Children and iodine: the weekly 6.25 mg iodine capsule is an adult product. Even averaged over a week, it is above the children's limits of 200–600 mcg a day. Infants under 1 year, and pregnant or breastfeeding women, need doses set by a doctor.

Accidental overdose: keep all supplements in child-resistant containers and out of reach. If a child swallows adult supplements, call Poison Control at **1-800-222-1222**.