

July 14, 2019

Clothing and Bedding Preparedness

Clothing and bedding are basic needs. We live in such a protected environment that it can be easy to lose sight of how important proper clothing can be. I love the wisdom of one Irish mother I heard say, “There is no bad weather, only bad clothes.” When we live in climate-controlled homes, buildings, and cars to the point that we are not greatly affected by the weather, it is easy to discount the need for proper clothing.

I often see children and teens in shorts and a T-shirt all year round with no coat and no socks. While it is true that illness is caused by bacteria and viruses, not cold, it is also true that when your body has to work to keep you warm it does not have as much energy to fight off germs. When weakened by extra demands such as cold, stress, or possibly hunger, it is easier to become sick. In an emergency or crisis situation you may not have access to good medical attention, and even the simplest cold can soon become life-threatening. Before the invention of antibiotics, dressing appropriately was the best defense against illness. It wouldn’t take much to put us back in this position.

After the increase in natural disasters worldwide over the last 10 years, many people are becoming aware of how important it is to have supplies in case of something like an earthquake. However, it is possible that conditions could arise that require much longer term supplies. We will cover both long- and short-term needs here.

Clothing for a Short-term Disaster

For an emergency where you need to leave your home, it is important to have at least a set of changeable clothing that fits at the

ready. A simple outfit and shoes should be something you keep by your bed in a “go bag.”

In the middle of the summer it is often hard to think of needing warm clothing, and in the middle of the winter it is hard to think of needing cool clothing-but where we have all 4 seasons it is important to consider both needs. The ability to dress in layers to accommodate for our range in temperature is the wisest way to prepare. There are clothes made especially for emergencies, but they are expensive. Aside from buying those, here is what I recommend for each person:

- Two pair of socks-If you have to move and walk any distance socks prevent blisters. If you leave in cold or wet weather socks help prevent frostbite, and a change of dry socks helps prevent hypothermia. You can go the extra mile and also have thin nylon socks next to your skin under your regular socks. This will help prevent blisters if you must walk. Especially in cold or wet weather it is also a good idea to have socks that will wick moisture away from your feet. Socks are something that you can leave in an emergency kit unless your feet grow enough to replace them.
- 1–2 pair of underwear (for kids, change out the pair in your kit when you buy new ones so the smaller ones get worn out)
- Good close-toed shoes that you can walk or work in (especially for children who have fast-growing feet, it may be wise to buy the next size up when you buy shoes and keep them in their emergency kit. When they need new shoes they can have the pair from their kit and you can buy the size bigger to replace them)
- Thermal underwear
- T-shirt
- Long-sleeved button-up shirt
- Hoodie/hoodie jacket with zipper
- Lightweight pants (like scrubs)
- Heavier pants (like sweat pants or jeans)
- Coat
- Sun hat
- Warm hat that covers ears
- Rain pants and jacket or poncho
- Winter gloves
- Work gloves
- Boots (snow or waterproof)

Clothing for a Long-term Difficulty

Most of the people who experienced The Great Depression and the World Wars first hand are gone, and it is hard for the last two or three generations who have grown up in abundance to even imagine not having whatever they need readily available. However, there are many situations such as war, blocking of imports, financial collapse, strikes, unrest, terrorism, quarantine, and widespread disaster that could quickly and unexpectedly change our way of life. It is also possible that personal situations could change and a family or person could find themselves without their regular income. In any of these situations it may be difficult to meet basic needs.

There is something called normalcy bias that allows people to believe that what is normal to them will stay constant, but it is wisdom to override normalcy bias and be prepared.

Most adults have plenty of clothes to last a year. However, children who are still growing often do not. They can grow out of clothes and they wear clothes out if they don't have more than they need. Here are two things that you should consider in preparing to make sure you have the clothes you need long term.

1. Do you have clothes to last you at least a year that are suitable for all kinds of weather even if you don't have a good source of heat or air conditioning?
2. Do your children have enough clothes to last them through their next stage of growth and through the next year and for all seasons?

Think about layers and ways to use clothes in combination so that you don't need as many. Are there ways to shorten a girl's dress and use it for a top or cut off pants and hem them for shorts? If you get creative and resourceful you can find ways to be "clothing prepared."

If your budget makes it difficult to buy extra clothes, watch for sales and buy ahead. It is true that most of us have more clothes than we need right now. If this is what happens to you, it may be a good idea to have a checklist of what you feel each family member needs for each season and try to stick with that list. When you evaluate and find that you have the list filled it might be a good idea to buy ahead rather than just buying more.

Where Skills Are Important

When it is easier and almost cheaper to buy things than make them, who would want to sew unless it is a hobby, right? Wrong! During economic downturns and war years throughout history, when things got hard clothes wore out. Then what? People had to make do. The more skills they had, the better off they were. They used the rubber from old tires to re-sole their shoes. They cut down adult clothes to make children's clothes. They patched, they pieced, and they scrapped. I have never met anyone who was sorry they could sew or had similar skills, especially when they needed it. Knowing what to do and how to do it is an important part of self-reliance and preparedness.

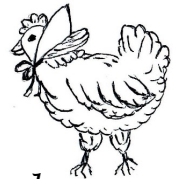
Do you have needles, thread, and extra buttons? Do you know how to use them?

Do you have a sewing machine, and do you know how to use it?

Do you have patterns for basics or can you make patterns?

The saddest and most counterproductive problem to preparedness is the lack of desire. It isn't that people can't do things, but that they don't want to do things. If this is you, consider your attitude and make a commitment to learn to do something you aren't good at today. In learning new skills the old Japanese proverb applies, "The best time to plant a tree is twenty years ago. The next best time to plant a tree is now." Learn a new skill now! The old "I don't do _____" statement regarding traditional homemaking or maintenance skills is outdated and inappropriate for any wise person desiring to become the best they can be.

Notes from Red Hen



Dear Silky,

I am delighted things are going so well for you. You do need a rooster though, and I have more great news. There is a young rooster here on our farm that is simply being fattened for supper because our old rooster is demanding that he is the boss. We will send him to Red's tomorrow with a truckload of grain and she can direct him to you.

— Happy Colonizing, Aunt Bitty