

Understand the Terminology

Source: Government of Canada

Best-Before Date

Best-before date, also known as durable life date, tells you when the durable life period of a pre-packaged food ends.

Durable life is the anticipated amount of time that an un-opened food product, stored under appropriate conditions, will retain its freshness, taste, nutritional value or any other qualities claimed by the manufacturer.

Once opened, the best-before date is no longer valid. The manufacturer determines a product's durable life.

Durable life, or best-before date is not government-regulated.

Expiry Date

Some foods, such as meal replacements, nutritional supplements, infant formulas and formulated liquid diets, must carry an expiration date. The expiration date is the date up to which the food maintains the nutrient content declared on the label and its microbiological and physical stability.

When an expiration date has passed, throw out the food.

Additional Tips

Keep your raw meat, poultry, fish and seafood cold. Refrigerate or freeze them as soon as you get home from the grocery store. Make sure your refrigerator is 4 °C (40 °F) or lower and your freezer is -18 °C (0 °F) or lower. Warmer temperatures allow bacteria to grow quickly.

Deli meats and hot dogs can be more risky for older adults to eat. As we age, it becomes harder for the immune system to protect us from food poisoning. Store deli meats in the refrigerator. Use pre-packaged deli meats or meats sliced by a grocer within four days after opening, even if this date is different than the best-before date.

Properly wrap and store cut fruit and vegetables in the refrigerator.

You can cool leftovers quickly by placing them in shallow containers. Refrigerate all leftovers including restaurant take-outs as soon as possible or within two hours.

Never leave raw meat, poultry, fish or seafood out on the counter more than two hours. After two hours at room temperature, the growth of bacteria in your food can become dangerous.

You can't tell if food is unsafe by its smell or taste. When in doubt, throw it out!

Resources

For additional resources on food safety, visit www.canada.ca/foodsafety to learn more about the following topics:

- Food safety for adults 60 and over
- Safe food storage
- Home safety tips for leftovers
- Safely defrosting foods
- How to read food date labels and packaging

Halton Region also offers many resources on food safety. To learn more, visit www.halton.ca.

Storing Food Safely



2025

Fast Facts

Older Adult Advisory Committee
(OAAC)

For more information,
visit www.halton.ca or call 311.



SCS-2431573



halton.ca 311



Fridge and Freezer Food Storage Guidelines

The following recommended refrigeration times are for **safety**, and the freezing times are for **quality**. If you store properly wrapped food in your freezer, the quality may be maintained longer.

Fridge: 4 °C (40 °F) or lower

Freezer: -18 °C (0 °F) or lower

Fresh meat	Fridge	Freezer
Beef	2-4 days	10-12 mths
Pork	2-4 days	8-12 mths
Lamb	2-4 days	8-12 mths
Veal	3-4 days	8-12 mths
Ground meat	1-2 days	2-3 mths

Fresh poultry	Fridge	Freezer
Chicken/Turkey whole	2-3 days	1 year
Chicken/Turkey pieces	2-3 days	6 mths

Fresh fish	Fridge	Freezer
Lean fish - cod, Flounder, etc.	3-4 days	6 mths
Fatty fish - Salmon, etc.	3-4 days	2 mths
Shellfish - clams, crab, lobster	12-24 hrs	2-4 mths
Scallops, shrimp, cooked shellfish	1-2 days	2-4 mths

Ham	Fridge	Freezer
Canned ham	6-9 mths	Don't freeze
Cooked ham	3-4 days	2-3 mths

Bacon and sausages	Fridge	Freezer
Bacon	1 week	1 mth
Raw sausage	1-2 days	1-2 mths
Pre-cooked sausage/patties	1 week	1-2 mths

Hot dogs	Fridge	Freezer
Un-opened	2 weeks	1-2 mths
Open	1 week	1-2 mths

Lunch meat and deli food	Fridge	Freezer
Un-opened lunch meat	2 weeks	1-2 mths
Opened lunch meat	3-5 days	1-2 mths
Deli packaged lunch meat	3-4 days	2-3 mths
Deli/home salads	3-5 days	Don't freeze

Leftovers	Fridge	Freezer
Cooked meat, egg, vegetables	3-4 days	2-3 mths
Cooked poultry and fish	3-4 days	4-6 mths
Broth/gravy	3-4 days	4-6 mths
Soups	2-3 days	4 mths

Frozen dinners	Fridge	Freezer
Keep frozen until cooking		3-4 mths

Eggs	Fridge	Freezer
Fresh in shell	3-4 weeks	Don't freeze
Fresh out of shell	2-4 days	4 mths
Hard-cooked	1 week	Doesn't freeze well
Egg substitutes un-opened	10 days	1 year
Egg substitutes opened	3 days	Don't freeze

Dairy products	Fridge	Freezer
Un-opened milk	Best before date	6 weeks
Opened milk	3 days	Don't freeze
Un-opened cottage cheese	Best before date	Doesn't freeze well
Opened cottage cheese	3 days	Don't freeze
Un-opened yogurt	Best before date	1-2 mths
Opened yogurt	3 days	Don't freeze
Soft cheese	1 week	Doesn't freeze well
Semi-soft cheese	2-3 weeks	8 weeks
Firm cheese	5 weeks	3 mths
Hard cheese	10 mths	1 year
Processed cheese	5 mths	3 mths

Dairy products (cont'd)	Fridge	Freezer
Un-opened salted butter	8 weeks	1 year
Un-opened unsalted butter	8 weeks	3 mths
Opened butter	3 weeks	Don't freeze

Vegetables	Fridge	Freezer
Beans	5 days	8 mths
Carrots, celery	2 weeks	10-12 mths
Leaf lettuce	3-7 days	Don't freeze
Iceberg lettuce	1-2 weeks	Don't freeze
Spinach	2-4 weeks	10-12 mths
Summer squash	1 week	10-12 mths
Winter squash	2 weeks	10-12 mths
Tomatoes	Don't refrigerate	2 mths

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