



# GUIDELINES FOR FOOD SHELF LIFE





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In response to an increased need for more information surrounding shelf life of food and guidelines for distributing food past its best before date, Food Banks Canada is pleased to expand on its existing guidelines chart to provide a more in-depth look into food categories and specific food items. Diving deeper into each food category, this booklet provides detailed information and guidelines for distributing food past its best before date. Charts will help users reference information on how long to distribute food past its best before date while considering factors like its storage temperature and whether it's fresh, canned or frozen product.

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# GUIDELINE FOR DISTRIBUTING FOOD - PAST THE



TIME FRAME PAST  
BEST BEFORE



PRODUCE



JUICES AND SOFT  
DRINKS



BREAD &  
BAKERY



PACKAGED GRAINS,  
CEREALS & BAKED  
GOODS



MEAT &  
SEAFOOD



DELI MEATS



PREPARED FOODS



MILK AND  
NON-DAIRY  
ALTERNATIVES



CULTURED  
DAIRY

PRODUCT DESCRIPTIONS	Fruit / Vegetables - Whole, Uncut, Unpeeled, Undamaged	Fruit & Vegetable Juices & Soft Drinks	Loaves, Rolls, Bagels, Muffins	Granola, Flours, Rices, Dry Pastas, Cookies, Crackers, Breakfast/Lunch Cereal Bars	Packaged and Bulk Meats, Poultry, Fish	Deli Meats, Sausages	Prepared meals, fresh pasta, cooked meats, Mixed Salads, Soups, Stews, Cut produce	Milk (Fresh, Powdered, Canned, UHT tetrapak); Soy & Almond Beverages	Yogurt, kefir, sour cream
ROOM TEMPERATURE	Fresh, whole 1 - 7 days	Less than 2 hours (If refrigeration needed)	Up to 1 Week	NA	Less than 2 hours	Less than 2 hours (If refrigeration needed)	Less than 2 hours	Less than 2 hours (If refrigeration needed)	Less than 2 hours
REFRIGERATED	Fresh, whole; leafy greens 1 day - 2 months (depending on produce and condition)	7 - 10 days (If refrigeration needed)	2 Weeks	NA	3 - 4 days whole pieces; 1 - 2 days ground; 1 - 2 days seafood/fish	3 - 5 deli counter; 7 days commercially package	2 - 3 days meal items; 3 - 4 days cut fruits and vegetables	1 - 2 Days (If refrigeration needed)	1 - 2 weeks cultured
FROZEN	1 Year	1 Year	3 Months	NA	Beef, lamb pork, veal, whole poultry 12 months; poultry pieces 6 months; ground meat 2-3 months; fish 2-6 Months; and shellfish 2-4 months	2 - 3 Months	4 Months	6 months; texture may change	1 - 3 months cultured; texture will change
CANNED / JARRED / BOTTLED	NA	1 Year	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	1 Year	NA
BOXED / BAGGED	NA	6 - 12 Months	Up to 1 Week	6 - 12 Months	NA	NA	NA	UHT - 6 months, Powdered*	NA

# BEST BEFORE DATE



CHEESE



FATS



GENERAL GROCERY  
(SHELF STABLE)



NON-FOOD



INFANT FORMULA  
AND NUTRITIONAL  
SUPPLEMENTS

	Cottage cheese, cream & soft cheeses, hard cheeses	Butter, Margarines; Cooking Oils (most)	May include: Canned pastas, canned meats/ fish, Tomato Sauces, condiments, etc.	Laundry Detergent, Mixed Product Pallets, Deodorants, Body Washes, Diapers, Infant Wipes	<b>Note:</b> These products contain Expiry Dates - not Best Before Dates
	Less than 2 hours	Less than 2 hours (If refrigeration needed)	NA	NA	DO NOT DISTRIBUTE PAST EXPIRY DATE
	1 - 2 weeks cottage cheese; 3 - 6 months hard blocks; 1 - 2 months soft blocks	1 - 5 Months	NA	NA	
	6 - 12 months hard cheese blocks; 3 - 6 month soft blocks	6 - 12 Months	NA	NA	
	NA	6 - 12 Months (shelf stable oils)	1 - 2 Year	1 Year	
	NA	NA	6 - 12 Months	1 Year	

**\* Milk powder:** Temperature is a critical quality factor for milk powder. Keep milk powder cool.

**Best Before Date:** This gives consumers information as to when the product is at its best - with sensory qualities as acceptable as the day it was made when stored under appropriate conditions and packaging is intact. Best Before dates indicate the shelf life of foods. They are not indicators of food safety.

Some manufacturers changed their wording in 2018 to "Better Before".

**Expiry Date:** Tells consumers that the product may not be providing them with the nutrients expected of the product and they should no longer consume it after that date.

**Products with Expiry Dates must not be shared past the date on the packaging.**

**Products Include:** Infant Formula (Canned or Boxed, Liquid or Powdered), and many Nutritional Supplements and Meal Replacements (Canned, Boxed, or Ready to Use, Liquid or Powdered).

Note that baby foods for older babies and toddlers have Best Before dates, not expiry dates.

## Food Products and their ability to be shared should always be based on:

- 1) Ensuring the product has been handled safely (ie. Chilled product is kept chilled).
- 2) Assessing all packaging for integrity (i.e., dents, creases, etc.) based on Food Banks Canada Safe Food Handling Standards.
- 3) That the product is at a level of quality (e.g., taste and smell) that is still worth sharing.
- 4) That the Manufacturer's Branding will not be compromised if the product is shared.

**NOTE:** This information is to be used as a guide only. It was developed based on general knowledge, industry practices and the understanding that best before dates are about sensory quality.

### FOR REFERENCE:

- CanadianFoodInspectionAgency, Date Labelling on Pre-packaged Foods, Date Modified: 2013-07-07, Available at: <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/food/information-for-consumers/fact-sheets/labelling-food-packaging-and-storage/date/eng/1332357469487/1332357545633>
- M.A. Freitas, J.C. Costa, Shelf life determination using sensory evaluation scores: A general Weibull modeling approach, Computers & Industrial Engineering, Vol. 51, No. 4, 2006, pp. 652-670.
- A. Giménez, F. Ares, G. Ares, Sensory shelf-life estimation: A review of current methodological approaches, Food Research International, Vol. 49, No 1, 2012, pp. 311-325.
- S. Guerra, C. Lagazio, L. Manzocco, et al., Risks and pitfalls of sensory data analysis for shelf life prediction: Data simulation applied to the case of coffee, Food Science and Technology, Vol. 41, No. 10, 2008, pp. 2070-2078.
- Stilltasty.com and EatByDate.com for additional guidelines.
- Utah State University Cooperative Extension Service, Food Storage: Dried Milk, Available at: <http://extension.usu.edu/foodstorage/htm/dried-milk>

**INFORMATION:** Contact Food Banks Canada at 1-877-535-0958

or [info@foodbanksCanada.ca](mailto:info@foodbanksCanada.ca) | Date created: January 2011. Date updated: February 2019.

# FRUIT & VEGETABLES

**NOTE:** Most fresh fruits and vegetables do not have best before dates - quality determines whether they should be shared.



Canned fruits & vegetables	Bagged frozen fruits & vegetables	Fresh, whole, undamaged, uncut fruits & vegetable	Root vegetables (e.g. carrots, beets, parsnips, etc) - depends on vegetable and condition	Cold shelf vegetables (e.g. broccoli, celery, green-top carrots) - depends on vegetable and condition	Fresh, cut up vegetables	Salad mixes and leafy greens (bagged, prewashed)	Shelled fresh garden peas	Bean sprouts (fresh, bagged)	Tender fruit (peaches, nectarines, plums) - depends on fruit and condition	Harder fruit e.g. apples, pears (depends on fruit and condition); fruit with skin (e.g. Oranges)	Berries (depends on fruit and condition)	Fresh, cut up fruit	Fresh fruit salad (mixed in juice)	Dried fruit various types
1-2 years	NA	Depends on produce	1-6 weeks	NA	< 2 hours	< 2 hours	< 2 hours	< 2 hours	Up to 1 week	1-2 weeks	1-3 days	< 2 hours	< 2 hours	6-12 months
NA	NA	Depends on produce	1-2 months	1-4 weeks	1 day - depends on prior storage conditions	1 day - depends on prior storage conditions	1 day - depends on prior storage conditions	1 day - depends on prior storage conditions	2-4 weeks	1-2 months	5-10 days	3-4 days	3-5 days	1-2 years
NA	8-10 months	Depends on produce	NA	NA	NA	NA	1 month	NA	NA	NA	6-8 months	NA	NA	indefinite

**If juice develops an off odor, flavor or appearance, or if mold appears, it should be discarded.**

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- 2) Assessing all packaging for integrity (i.e., damage, dents, creases, etc.) based on Food Banks Canada Safe Food Handling Standards.
- 3) Ensuring the product is at a level of quality (e.g., taste and smell) that is still worth sharing.
- 4) Ensuring the manufacturer's brand will not be compromised if the product is shared.



**Assumptions:** refrigerator temperatures are maintained at 0°C-4°C (food keeps fresh longer at 0°C-2°C than at 3°C-4°C); freezer temperatures are maintained at -18°C; room temperature storage is 10-25°C, dry and dark.

**Best Before Date** is an indicator of the shelf life of a food.

It is not an indicator of food safety. When stored under appropriate conditions and the packaging is intact, the food is expected to have acceptable taste and smell at its best before date.

**Expiry Date** is an indicator of nutritional quality. At the Expiry Date the

food will have the nutritional content declared on the label if the food was stored under appropriate conditions and the packaging is intact. Most foods have Best Before dates. Foods such as infant formulas and meal replacements will have Expiry Dates. Products should not be shared after the Expiry Date.

# MILKS CREAM & OTHER BEVERAGES

	 TIME FRAME PAST BEST BEFORE	 FLUID MILK & NON-DAIRY BEVERAGES - REFRIGERATED	 FLUID MILK & NON-DAIRY BEVERAGES - SHELF-STABLE	 POWDERED MILK	 EVAPORATED MILK (CANNED)	 CREAM	 REFRIGERATED COFFEE WHITENER	 POWDERED COFFEE WHITENER	 FRUIT/ VEG JUICE	 FRUIT/ VEG JUICE	 FRUIT/ VEG JUICE	 FRUIT/ VEG JUICE	 HOT DRINKS	 COLD DRINK MIXES	 SOFT DRINKS	 WATER
Product Descriptions	Milk and non-dairy beverages (e.g. Soy, Almond, rice, Coconut beverages) Refrigerated	Ultra High Temperature Pasteurized (Tetra-Pak or pouch) Milk and non-dairy beverages (e.g. Soy, Almond, Coconut beverages) Shelf stable	Milk Powder* (pasteurized bag, box or canned powder)	Evaporated Milk commercially canned	Pasteurized refrigerated liquid cream	Non-dairy refrigerated liquid coffee whitener	Non-dairy powdered coffee whitener	Juice boxes shelf stable	Juice cans shelf stable	Refrigerated juice - pasteurized	Frozen juice concentrate	Instant coffee, coffee pods, tea bags; hot chocolate, ovaltine	Powdered dry drink mixes E.g. ice tea, flavoured crystals	Canned and bottled soda/pop, vitamin water, energy drinks	Bottled water plain	
Room Temperature	< 2 hours	1 - 6 months	Non-fat in bag 3 months; non-fat in can 2 years; whole milk	1 year; low fat skimmed evaporated milk 9 months	< 2 hours	< 2 hours	2 - 4 months	2 - 3 months	6 - 9 months	7 - 10 days	< 2 hours	Instant coffee 2- 3 years; ground coffee (Vacuum packed) 1 year; coffee pods 3-8 months; tea 6-12 months; hot chocolate 6-12	6 - 12 month	9 - 12 month	2 - 3 years	
Refrigerated	2-3 days dairy; 3-5 days soy, rice, almond, coconut, hemp milks	NA	NA	NA	1 - 2 weeks	5 - 7 days	NA	NA	NA	7 - 10 days	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	
Frozen	3 - 4 months; texture may change	NA	3 years	NA	2-4 months; texture will change, whipping cream will not be whippable	NA	NA	NA	NA	8 - 12 months	8 - 12 months	Instant coffee indefinite; whole bean coffee 2-3 years; ground coffee 1-2 years	1 - 2 years	NA	NA	

- \*Milk powder** Temperature is a critical quality factor for milk powder. Keep milk powder cool at 10°C or lower, milk powder can have 3-5 year shelf life; at 32°C, off flavours will develop within 6 months.
- Best Before Date** This gives consumers information as to when the product is at its best - with sensory qualities as acceptable as the day it was made when stored under appropriate conditions and packaging is intact. Best Before dates indicate the shelf life of foods. They are not indicators of food safety.
- Expiry Date** Tells consumers that the product may not be providing them with the nutrients expected of the product and they should no longer consume it after that date. Products with Expiry Dates must never be shared past the date on the packaging.

### Food Products and their ability to be shared should always be based on:

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- 2) Assessing all cans for integrity (i.e., dents, creases, etc.) based on Food Banks Canada Safe Food Handling Standards.
- 3) That the product is at a level of quality (e.g., taste and smell) that is still worth sharing.
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**For reference:** Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Date Labelling on Pre-packaged Foods, Date Modified: 2013-07-07, Available at: <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/food/information-for-consumers/fact-sheets/labelling-food-packaging-and-storage/date/eng/1332357469487/1332357545633>.  
M.A. Freitas, J.C. Costa, Shelf life determination using sensory evaluation scores: A general Weibull modeling approach, Computers & Industrial Engineering, Vol. 51, No. 4, 2006, pp. 652-670. A. Giménez, F. Ares, G. Ares, Sensory shelf-life estimation: A review of current methodological approaches, Food Research International, Vol. 49, No 1, 2012, pp. 311-325.  
S. Guerra, C. Lagazio, L. Manzocco, et al., Risks and pitfalls of sensory data analysis for shelf life prediction: Data simulation applied to the case of coffee, Food Science and Technology, Vol. 41, No. 10, 2008, pp. 2070-2078.  
Utah State University Cooperative Extension Service, Food Storage: Dried Milk, Available at: <http://extension.usu.edu/foodstorage/hdm/dried-milk>

# GRAINS, CEREALS & LEGUMES

TIME FRAME PAST BEST BEFORE	CRACKERS AND COOKIES	BREADS	BREADS	DRY PASTA/ NOODLES/ WHITE RICE	FRESH PASTA/ NOODLES	WHOLE GRAIN FLOURS, GRAIN FLAKES, BROWN RICE EXCEPT OATS	LOW FAT FLOURS	OTHER GRAINS & CEREALS	DRIED LEGUMES	OATMEALS	BOXED CEREALS	FLOUR BASED MIXES
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Product Descriptions	Dry crackers and cookies, rice cakes	Bakery style loaves, rolls, etc.	Commercially packaged loaves, rolls, bagels, muffins, etc.	Dry pasta (e.g. wheat or rice noodles of various shapes)	Fresh refrigerated pasta/ noodles (e.g. wheat or rice noodles)	Whole grain flours with germ/fat content (e.g. whole wheat flour), Brown Rice	White flour, cornmeal/ corn flour, chickpea (gram/ besan) flour	White rice, whole barley and low fat grains	Dried beans, peas and lentils	Instant oatmeal, flavoured instant oatmeal; 1-5 minute oatmeals	Various boxed/ packaged breakfast - type cereals	Cake, cookie brownie, muffin, biscuit, pancake/ waffle mixes
Room Temperature	1 - 2 months	2 - 3 days	5 - 7 days	1 - 2 years	Less than 2 hours	4 - 6 months; brown rice 6 - 8 months	Corn flour 9-12 months; corn meal 1-2 years; white & rice flour 6-8 months	3 years	3 years	Instant - 1-2 years; flavoured 6-9 months; other 2-3 years	6 - 8 months	6 - 12 months
Refrigerated	NA	NA	1 - 2 Weeks	NA	4 - 5 days	6 - 8 months; brown rice 6 - 8 months	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Frozen	4 - 5 months	6 months	6 months	NA	6 - 8 months	6 - 12 months	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

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**Assumptions:** refrigerator temperatures are maintained at 0°C-4°C (food keeps fresh longer at 0°C-2°C than at 3°C-4°C); freezer temperatures are maintained at -18°C; room temperature storage is 10-25°C, dry and dark.

**Best Before Date** is an indicator of the shelf life of a food. It is not an indicator of food safety. When stored under appropriate conditions and the packaging is intact, the food is expected to have acceptable taste and smell at its best before date.

**Expiry Date** is an indicator of nutritional quality. At the Expiry Date the food will have the nutritional content declared on the label if the food was stored under appropriate conditions and the packaging is intact. Most foods have Best Before dates. Foods such as infant formulas and meal replacements will have Expiry Dates. Products should not be shared after the Expiry Date.

# FATS, OILS & DRESSINGS

	 TIME FRAME PAST BEST BEFORE	 OIL (LIQUID)	 OIL (LIQUID)	 HARD FATS	 HARD FATS	 HARD FATS	 HARD FATS	 SALAD DRESSING	 SALAD DRESSING	 SALAD DRESSING	 DESSERT TOPPINGS	 DESSERT TOPPINGS	 DESSERT TOPPINGS
	Product Descriptions	Cooking oil - e.g. canola, corn, safflower, vegetable oil	Specialty oils -e.g. sesame, walnut, olive (protect from light)	Ghee, coconut oil	Margarine	Butter	Shortening / lard	Mayonnaise	Creamy dressings	Vinagrette dressings	Whipped topping - aerosol can (refrigerated)	Dessert topping mix dry powdered	Dessert topping frozen
Room Temperature	12 months	Olive 12 months; Sesame 6 months; walnut or hazelnut 1 month;	12 months	NA	NA	6 months	3 - 4 months	1 - 2 months	3 - 4 months	NA	12 months	NA	
Refrigerated	2 years (some oils will separate)	NA	NA	4 - 5 months	1 month	12 months	NA	NA	NA	3 months	NA	NA	
Frozen	NA	NA	NA	6- 8 months	6 - 12 months; unsalted 6 - 9 months; cultured 6 - 9 months	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	6 months	

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# PREPARED & DELI FOODS



TIME FRAME  
PAST BEST  
BEFORE



DELI  
SALADS



HOT DELI  
MEALS



COLD DELI  
MEALS



MEAL  
MIXES



CONDIMENTS



CONDIMENTS



CONDIMENTS



CONDIMENTS



PASTA  
SAUCES



PASTA  
SAUCES



SAUCE  
MIXES



CANNED  
FOODS



VINEGAR

Product Descriptions	Mixed deli salads	Hot prepared meals e.g. rotisserie chicken (must be kept hot above 60C or cold below 4C)	Cold meals (e.g. sandwiches) - must not be unrefrigerated, depends on condition	Macaroni & Cheese dinner mixes (dry boxed mixes)	Tomato based chili sauce, salsa, taco sauce (bottle/jar)	Mustard, relish, pickles, bullion cubes/granules	Various sauces (e.g. hoisin, fish, blackbean, oyster, plum)	Ketchup, BBQ sauce, horseradish (shelf stable), cocktail/seafood sauce	Tomato based pasta sauce	Cream based pasta sauce	Dry packaged Sauce mixes	Mixed commercially canned foods (e.g. baked beans, spaghetti noodles and sauce, stews, soups)*	white, cider, rice, malt vinegars
Room Temperature	NA	NA	NA	3 months	12 months	2 years	Soy, steak Worcestershire sauce 3 years; hot pepper sauce 5 years	6 - 12 months	12 months	6 - 8 months	6 - 12 months	2 years	Indefinitely (may develop cloudiness)
Refrigerated	1 - 2 days	3 - 4 days	1 - 2 days	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Frozen	NA	1 month	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

\* 2 years after the best before date; 5 years after manufacture date if no best before date.

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# EGGS, CHEESE & DAIRY PRODUCTS

TIME FRAME PAST BEST BEFORE	SHELL EGGS	LIQUID EGGS & SUBSTITUTES	CHEESES FROM RETAIL DELI	HARD CHEESE COMMERCIALY PACKAGED	SEMI-SOFT/SOFT CHEESE COMMERCIALY PACKAGED	COTTAGE CHEESE	HARD DRY CHEESES	REFRIGERATED PROCESSED CHEESES	REFRIGERATED DAIRY-BASED DIPS	FERMENTED DAIRY PRODUCTS
<b>Product Descriptions</b>	Grade A eggs in shell	Pasteurized eggs / egg substitutes	Deli packaged cheese slices and pieces	E.g., Cheddar, Marble, swiss, brick; block, shredded or sliced	E.g., Mozzarella, Camembert, Brie, Feta, blue, Gruyere, Havarti; block, shredded, sliced, crumbled	Cottage cheese, Ricotta cheese	Grated parmesan/ romano sold unrefrigerated	Refrigerated cream cheese, Single Slices, Velveeta, Laughing Cow triangles	Dips made with sour cream, cream cheese commercially packaged	Yogurt, sour cream, kefir, commercial buttermilk
<b>Room Temperature</b>	Less than 2 hours	Less than 2 hours	Less than 2 hours	Less than 2 hours	Less than 2 hours	Less than 2 hours	9 - 12 months	Less than 2 hours	Less than 2 hours	<2 hours
<b>Refrigerated</b>	Shell eggs 4 - 5 weeks	3 months	2 - 3 weeks	1 - 2 weeks if shredded or sliced; 3 - 6 months block	2 week if shredded/ sliced/crumbled; 1 - 2 months	3 - 5 days	9 - 12 months	1 - 2 months	1 - 2 days	1 - 2 weeks
<b>Frozen</b>	NA	12 months	2 - 3 months	2-3 months if shredded/ sliced; 6 -12 months block; texture will change	2 - 3 months if shredded, sliced or crumbled; 3 - 6 months block; texture will change	4 months, texture will change	9 - 12 months	3 - 6 months; texture may change; cream cheese in block 2 months; cream cheese in tub freezing not recommended	NA	1 - 3 months; texture will change

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# MEAT POULTRY SEAFOOD & ALTS



TIME FRAME  
PAST BEST  
BEFORE



UNCOOKED MEAT  
(EXCL. POULTRY)



UNCOOKED  
POULTRY



UNCOOKED FISH/  
SHELLFISH



COOKED MEATS/  
FISH/ SHELLFISH



REFRIGERATED DELI  
MEATS COMMERCIALY  
PACKAGED



DELI MEATS FROM  
RETAIL COUNTER



UNREFRIGERATED  
MEATS



VEGGIE  
BURGERS



TOFU/SOYBEAN  
CURD



PEANUT  
BUTTER

Product Descriptions	Packaged and bulk uncooked meats, ground meats/fresh sausages	Packaged and bulk uncooked poultry, ground poultry/fresh poultry sausages	Packaged and bulk uncooked (low fat and high fat fish, shellfish)	Tins, commercial pouches (e.g. beef, salmon, tuna, sardines, mackerel, shellfish)	Cooked deli meats (cold cuts), semi-dry sausage/salami, cooked sausages (e.g. hotdogs, weiners, kielbasa)	Cooked, sliced or chunks of deli meats (cold cuts) packaged at retail counter	Dry, hard meats (e.g., dry salami, pepperoni and jerky)	Veggie burgers (frozen)	Fresh tofu/soybean curd
Room Temperature	Less than 2 hours	Less than 2 hours	Less than 2 hours	1 - 2 years	Less than 2 hours	Less than 2 hours	4 - 6 weeks	NA	Less than 2 hours
Refrigerated	3-5 days; ground meats 1-2 days; bacon 1 week	1 - 2 days	1 - 2 days	NA	7 - 10 day	3 - 5 days	6 months	NA	3 - 5 days
Frozen	Beef 9 - 12 months; pork, ham 6 - 9 months; lamb 6 - 9 months; veal 4 - 6 months; ground meat 3 - 4 months; sausages and bacon 1 - 2 months	Whole poultry 12 months; pieces 6-12 months; ground 3-4 months; sausages and bacon 1-2 months	Low fat fish (cod, tilapia) 6 - 8 months; high fat fish (salmon, char, mackerel) 2 - 4 months; shellfish 3 - 4 months	NA	2 - 3 months	2 - 3 months	9 - 12 months	6 months	3 - 5 months

FOR PEANUT BUTTER AND NUT BUTTERS,  
SEE MISCELLANEOUS

The information in this table is to be used as a guide only. It was developed based on general knowledge, industry practices and the understanding that best before dates are about sensory quality.

The suitability for sharing foods should always be based on:

- 1) Ensuring the product has been handled safely (i.e., refrigerated products are kept at 0°C-4°C).
- 2) Assessing all packaging for integrity (i.e., damage, dents, creases, etc.) based on Food Banks Canada Safe Food Handling Standards.
- 3) Ensuring the product is at a level of quality (e.g., taste and smell) that is still worth sharing.
- 4) Ensuring the manufacturer's brand will not be compromised if the product is shared.



**Assumptions:** refrigerator temperatures are maintained at 0°C-4°C (food keeps fresh longer at 0°C-2°C than at 3°C-4°C); freezer temperatures are maintained at -18°C; room temperature storage is 10-25°C, dry and dark.

**Best Before Date** is an indicator of the shelf life of a food. It is not an indicator of food safety. When stored under appropriate conditions and the packaging is intact, the food is expected to have acceptable taste and smell at its best before date.

**Expiry Date** is an indicator of nutritional quality. At the Expiry Date the food will have the nutritional content declared on the label if the food was stored under appropriate conditions and the packaging is intact. Most foods have Best Before dates. Foods such as infant formulas and meal replacements will have Expiry Dates. Products should not be shared after the Expiry Date.

# BABY FOOD & MEAL REPLACEMENTS



TIME FRAME  
PAST BEST  
BEFORE



INFANT  
FORMULA



BABY AND  
TODDLER FOOD



BABY AND  
TODDLER FOOD



ADULT MEAL  
REPLACEMENTS



ADULT MEAL  
REPLACEMENTS



MEAL/ENERGY  
SUPPLEMENTS



MEAL/ENERGY  
SUPPLEMENTS



MEAL/ENERGY  
SUPPLEMENTS

Product Descriptions	All Infant Formula - complete meals for infants	Cereal mix (dry mix)	Vegetable/fruit puree, mixed foods (prepared in jars, pouches, etc.)	Complete meal replacement liquid (E.g. Ensure, Boost)	Complete meal replacement powders	Meal substitutes/supplements (e.g. breakfast drinks)	Breakfast/lunch/energy bars (e.g. Clif)	Dry or chewy granola and cereal bars (e.g. Quaker, Nature Valley, Kind)
Room Temperature	Do not distribute past expiry date	6 months	6 months	Do not distribute past expiry date	Do not distribute past expiry date	6 months	6 months	6 months
Refrigerated	Do not distribute past expiry date	NA	NA	Do not distribute past expiry date	Do not distribute past expiry date	NA	NA	NA
Frozen	Do not distribute past expiry date	NA	NA	Do not distribute past expiry date	Do not distribute past expiry date	NA	NA	NA

**Products with Expiry Dates should not be shared past the date on the packaging.**

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# MISCELLANEOUS

	 TIME FRAME PAST BEST BEFORE	 PUDDING	 PUDDING	 JAM/JELLY	 SWEET SPREADS	 SUGAR AND HONEY	 PEANUT BUTTER & NUT BUTTERS	 NUTS & SEEDS	 SNACKS - HIGH FAT	 SNACKS - LOW FAT	 SNACKS	 SNACKS
Product Descriptions		Pudding cups (non-refrigerated)	Dry pudding mix	Fruit jams and jellies, marmalade	Nutella	Sugar and honey (unpasteurize and pasteurized; creamed, liquid, crystallized)	Peanut Butter; Natural peanut butter (no hydrogenated oils) and nut butters	Shelled nuts and seeds	Potato chips, corn chips, nachos*	Pretzels, popcorn (prepared)	Popcorn kernels unpopped	Popcorn kernels in microwaveable packets
Room Temperature		1 month	1-2 months	1 year	1-2 years	Indefinitely (keep moisture out)	12 months; Natural style 2-3 months	2-4 weeks	2 months	6 months	2 years	12 months
Refrigerated		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	12 months; Natural style 3-6 months	6-9 months	NA	NA	NA	NA
Frozen		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	9-12 month	NA	NA	NA	NA

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