

# Food Safety During a Power Failure

*A power failure can make food unsafe to eat. Proper refrigerating, cooking, and washing may not be possible. As a result, bacteria can grow and make you sick.*

You can reduce your risk of food poisoning by following these guidelines:

## What to do with frozen food

- Keep the freezer door closed to maintain the cold temperature inside.
- Without electrical power, a full upright or chest freezer will keep food frozen for about two days. A half-full freezer will keep food frozen for one day.
- Put bags of ice in the freezer to help keep it cold.
- If electrical power will be off for a long period of time, take food to a friend or neighbour's freezer where the power is on, if possible.
- Food that still contains ice crystals can usually be safely refrozen. Refreezing may reduce the quality of the food.

## What to do with refrigerated food

- Keep the refrigerator door closed to keep it cold inside.
- Without electrical power, the refrigerator will keep food cool for four to six hours.
- Add bags of ice to help keep the refrigerator cool longer.
- Make sure raw meat, poultry, fish, and seafood are wrapped very well and placed in the coldest section of your refrigerator.
- Call your healthcare provider if you need information on how to properly store your prescription drugs that require refrigeration.

## Foods to throw out

Throw out any food item with a strange smell or colour, and the following foods if they have been above 4°C (40°F) for two hours or longer:

### Meat and seafood

- Raw or cooked meat, poultry, fish, and seafood

### Milk-based products

- Milk, cream, yogurt, sour cream, buttermilk, and evaporated milk
- Custards, puddings, and cream-filled pastries
- Soft or semi-soft, low-fat, and shredded cheeses
- Cheesecake

### Fruit and vegetables

- Fresh-cut fruit and vegetables
- Cut and washed packaged greens
- Salad, including vegetable, pasta, and potato salad
- Open containers of vegetable juice
- Cooked rice, potatoes, and other vegetables

### Sauces and dressings

- Open containers of spaghetti sauce, mayonnaise, and tartar sauce
- Cream-based salad dressings
- Hoisin, oyster, fish, and Worcestershire sauces

### Other

- Fresh or cooked eggs, egg dishes, and egg substitutes
- Gravy, soups, stews, and casseroles
- Fresh or cooked spaghetti and pasta
- Pizza
- Refrigerated rolls, biscuits, and cookie dough
- Commercial garlic in oil
- Prepared baby formula

## **Foods that are safe without refrigeration**

- Uncut fresh fruit and vegetables
- Fruit juice, canned fruit, and fruit pies
- Margarine and butter
- Peanut butter, jam, and jelly
- Bread, bagels, and muffins
- Ketchup, barbecue sauce, and mustard
- Unprepared powdered milk
- Dry, unopened canned food
- Processed and hard cheeses
- Hard and grated Parmesan or Romano cheese

## **How to store dry food**

Dry foods—such as uncooked rice or pasta, crackers, cookies, and potato chips—do not need to be kept cool. Make sure all food, including dry goods, is stored off the floor in enclosed containers to protect them from pets, insects, and rodents.

## **Where to cook food**

Never use a charcoal grill, gas barbecue, or gas camp stove indoors. The fumes can kill you.

## **Think clean**

Wash your hands with soap and water before and after you handle, prepare, or serve food. If water is not available use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Clean and sanitize your countertops, cutting boards, cutlery, and utensils with a bleach solution. You can make it by adding 2.5 ml ( $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon) of household bleach to 1L (4 cups) of water. This will kill bacteria.

**Do not eat any food you think may be unsafe.**

**When in doubt, throw it out.**

## **Questions?**

Contact Public Health by calling 1-800-265-4753 or visit our website [www.wdgpUBLICHEALTH.ca](http://www.wdgpUBLICHEALTH.ca).

*Adapted from the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and Canadian Food Inspection Agency.*