

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	DELIMEATS	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	BEF	ORE D	DATE F	ood Banks Canada
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	Note: These products contain Expiry Dates - not Best Before Dates
Less than 2 hours	Less than 2 hours (If refrigeration needed)	NA	NA	
1 - 2 weeks cottage cheese; 3 - 6 months hard blocks; 1 - 2 months soft blocks	1-5 Months	NA	NA	DO NOT DISTRIBUTE
6 - 12 months hard cheese blocks; 3 - 6 month soft blocks	6 - 12 Months	NA	NA	PAST EXPIRY DATE
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 Nutrional 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.
- 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.

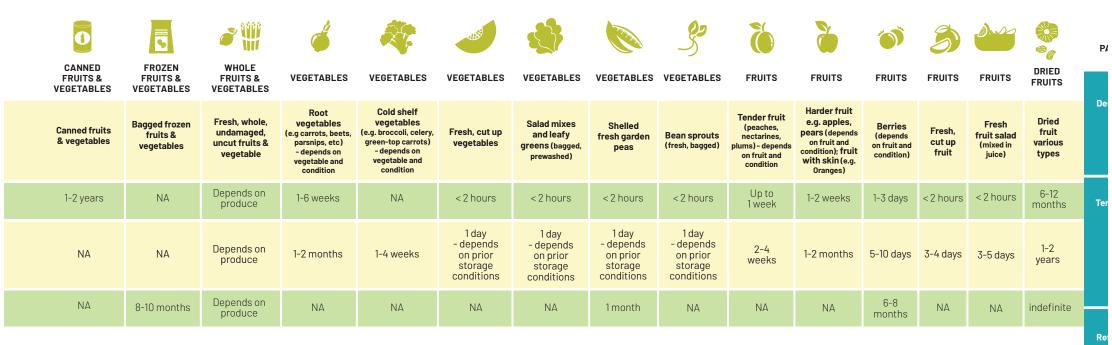
FOR REFERENCE:

- CanadianFoodInspectionAgency,DateLabellingonPre-packagedFoods,DateModified:2013-07-07,Availableat: http://www.inspection.gc.ca/food/information-for-consumers/fact-sheets/labelling-food-packaging-andstorage/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 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.



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

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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., damange, 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.

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Assumptions: refrigerator temperatures are maintained at $0^{\circ}C-4^{\circ}C$ (food keeps fresh longer at $0^{\circ}C-2^{\circ}C$ than at $3^{\circ}C-4^{\circ}C$); freezer temperatures are maintained at $-18^{\circ}C$; room temperature storage is $10-25^{\circ}C$, 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 Dateis 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.

For more information contact Food Banks Canada at 1-877-535-0958 or info@foodbankscanada.ca | Date updated: February 2019.

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 Pasteruized (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 - pasteruized	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
5	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
te	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.

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- **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:

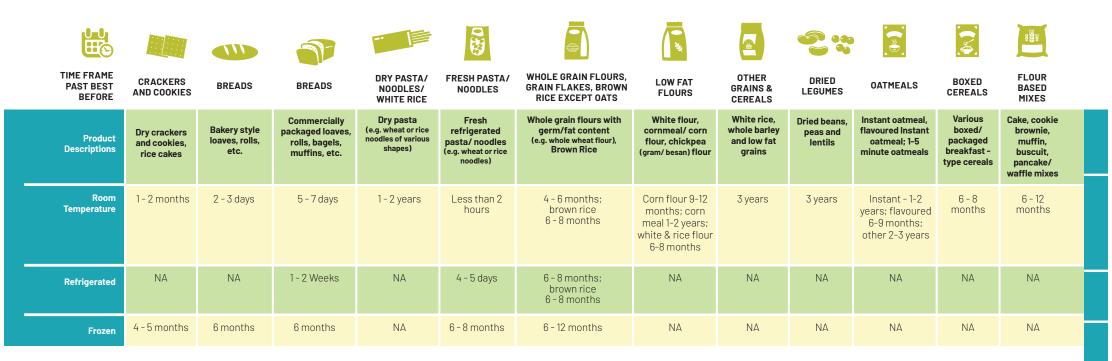
- 1) Ensuring the product has been handled safely (ie. Chilled product is kept chilled).
- Assessing all cans for integrity (i.e., dents, creases, etc.) based on Food Banks Canada Safe Food Handling Standards.
- 3) That the product is at a level of quality (e.g., taste and smell) that is still worth sharing.
- 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: 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.

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GRAINS, CEREALS & LEGUMES



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- 2) Assessing all packaging for integrity (i.e., damange, 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 $0^{\circ}C-4^{\circ}C$ (food keeps fresh longer at $0^{\circ}C-2^{\circ}C$ than at $3^{\circ}C-4^{\circ}C$); freezer temperatures are maintained at -18°C; room temperature storage is 10-25°C, dry and dark.

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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			HARD	HARD	HARD	HARD	SALAD		SALAD	DESSERT	DESSERT	DESSERT
BEFORE	Cooking oil	Specialty oils	Ghee,	Margarine	Butter	Shortening	Mayonnaise	Creamy	Vinagrette	Whipped topping	Dessert topping	Dessert
Product Descriptions	– e.g. canola, corn, safflower, vegetable oil	-e.g. sesame, walnut, olive (protect from light)	coconut oil			/ lard		dressings	dressings	- aresol can (regfrigerated)	mix dry powdered	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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- 4) Ensuring the manufacturer's brand will not be compromised if the product is shared.

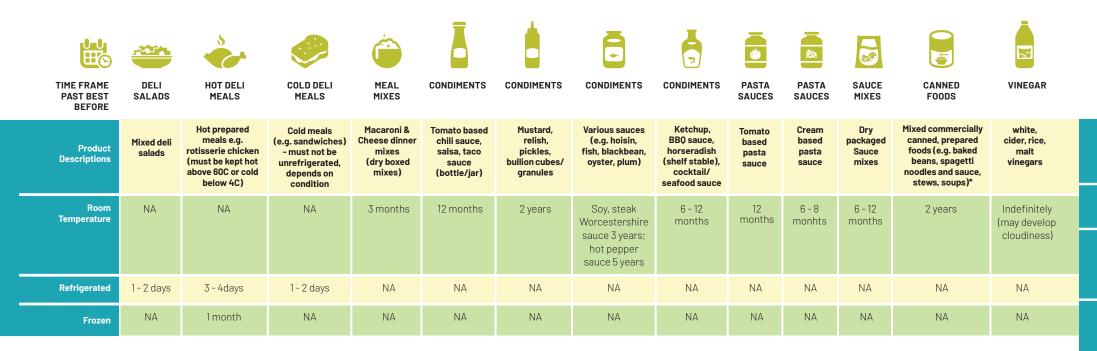
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PREPARED & DELI FOODS



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

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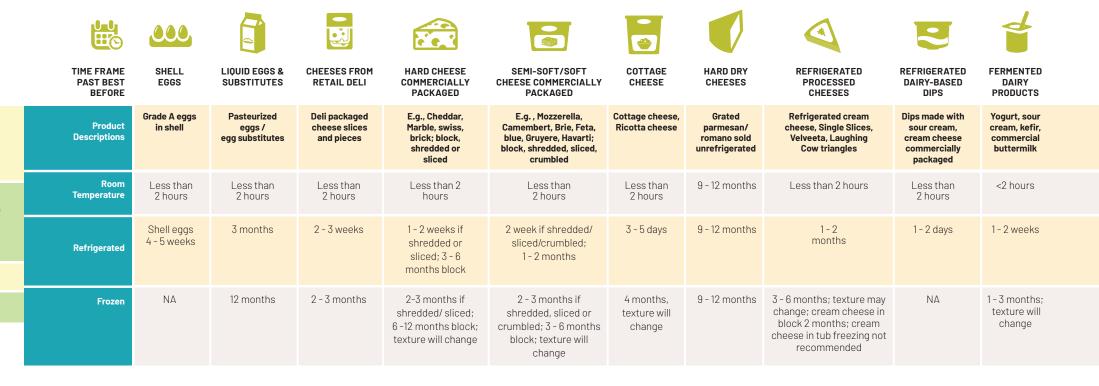
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food will have the nutritional content declared on the label if the food was stored under appropriate conditions and the packaging is intact. Most foods have Best Before dates. Foods such as infant formulas and meal replacements will have Expiry Dates.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

EGGS, CHEESE & DAIRY PRODUCTS



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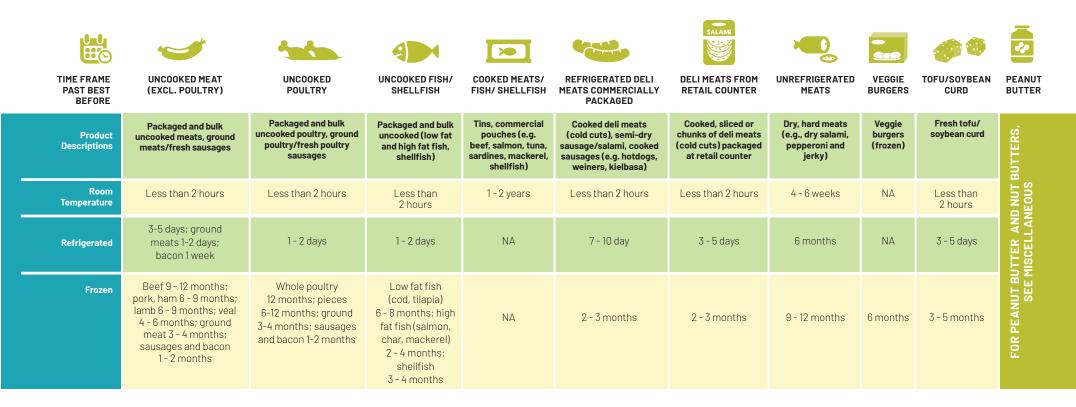
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packaging is intact. Most foods have Best Before dates. Foods such as infant formulas and meal replacements will have Expiry Dates. Products should not be shared after the Expiry Date.

MEAT POULTRY SEAFOOD & ALTS



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- 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.

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For more information contact Food Banks Canada at 1-877-535-0958 or info@foodbankscanada.ca | Date updated: February 2019.

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 substititues/ 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	C
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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is Food Banks Canada's online learning community. It contains access to resources, learning materials, national conference updates, news, webinars, virtual food bank tours and much more!



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