

What to Throw Out When the Power Goes Out

ADA Provides Tips to Keep Your Food Safe and Family Healthy during a Power Outage

CHICAGO (August 15, 2003) – With the largest blackout in North American history currently affecting as many as 50 million people, food spoilage can be a serious problem when refrigerators and freezers lose power. Consumers can help avoid spoilage and foodborne illness in their homes by making sure foods stay properly refrigerated during a power outage.

The American Dietetic Association recommends following these simple home food safety tips:

- During a power outage, keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed and open them only when necessary. If power is restored within four hours, items in the refrigerator should be safe to eat. A full freezer will stay at freezing temperatures for two days if the door remains closed. A half-full freezer will stay at freezing temperatures for one day if the door remains closed.
- Stock up on non-perishable foods that don't require refrigeration, and choose single-serve sizes if available to avoid the need for refrigeration of unused portions. Consider these easy, healthy, shelf-stable foods:
 - **Breads/Grains:** single-serving boxes of cereal, trail mix, energy bars, granola bars, cereal bars, bagels, muffins, crackers, popcorn and chips.
 - **Fruits and Vegetables:** carrot and celery sticks and other cut-up raw vegetables, grapes, single-serve applesauce, whole fruit (apples, peaches, bananas), dried fruit mix and juice boxes.
 - **Dairy Alternatives:** single-serve milk or soy beverage boxes and nonrefrigerated pudding cups.
 - **Meat and Other Protein Sources:** cans of tuna, beef jerky, peanut butter (for sandwiches or with celery and apples), nuts and single-serve packages of peanut butter and crackers.
- When power is restored, allow time for the refrigerator to reach below 40 degrees Fahrenheit before restocking.
- Make sure - before an outage - that the refrigerator is set below 40 degrees Fahrenheit. Place a refrigerator thermometer in the center of the middle shelf and check the temperature. After a blackout, check the refrigerator temperature. If it has risen to 45 degrees Fahrenheit or higher, discard any potentially spoiled foods. Such foods include meat, poultry, fish, dairy and egg products, soft cheese, cooked beans, cooked rice, cooked potatoes, cooked pasta, potato salad, custard and pudding.
- And of course, when in doubt, throw it out.

With approximately 65,000 members, the American Dietetic Association is the nation's largest organization of food and nutrition professionals. ADA serves the public by promoting optimal nutrition, health and well-being. To locate a registered dietitian in your area, visit the American Dietetic Association at www.eatright.org.

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**Impulse Research Corporation conducted the home food safety survey in August 2003 for the American Dietetic Association through an online survey of a random sample of 1,024 full-time employees, both men and women, who work at a desk. The sample was chosen to closely match U.S. population demographics.*

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