

Safe Food and Water During an Emergency

Food Safety

During an emergency, power failure or mechanical breakdown, food spoilage can result from lack of proper refrigeration.

Food in your Freezer

- A full freezer will keep food frozen about 2 days.
- A half-loaded freezer about half a day if the freezer is left closed.

Additional insulation, covering the freezer with blankets, and adding ice to your freezer will assist in keeping the food frozen longer.

Refreezing

As a general rule, if there are ice crystals in the food, and there are no obvious signs of spoilage, then it's safe to quickly refreeze.

- Meat that has thawed but the temperature has not increased to above 4°C can be safely cooked and then eaten or refrozen.
- Do not refreeze thawed cooked foods.

Throw away any food that has completely thawed and has been sitting at room temperature for more than 2 hours or an unknown period of time. **Note:** Partial thawing and refreezing of food may reduce the food quality.

Food in your Refrigerator

Keep an appliance thermometer in your refrigerator. A refrigerator without power will keep food cold for 4-6 hours depending on room temperature and the cooler temperature before the power outage.

- Keep the refrigerator door closed and add ice to maximize the time the food stays cold.
- Use a probe type thermometer to monitor internal food temperatures.
- Immediate use of potentially hazardous foods is recommended when the internal temperature of the food rises above 4°C.

Potentially hazardous foods stored above 4°C for more than 2 hours should be thrown away.

Potentially hazardous foods include:

- Raw and cooked meats, poultry, seafood, dairy products (milk, cream, yogurt, soft cheeses) and eggs
 - Cooked pasta, rice and potatoes
 - Prepared salads, casseroles, soups and stews, custard, pudding, chiffon, cream filled
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The following foods can be stored without refrigeration:

- Margarine and butter
- Fresh fruit and vegetables
- Peanut butter, jams and jellies
- Ketchup, barbeque sauce, mustard
- Hard or processed cheese

Alternate Food Storage

- Consider relocating food to freezers of those not affected by the power outage.
- If the outdoor temperatures are less than 4°C and you can place food in a leak proof covered container where animals cannot access it and it is protected from the warmth of the sun, you may be able to keep your food cold. **Note:** monitor food temperatures.

Garbage Disposal

All contaminated food should be double bagged and placed in leak proof containers.

Your Water Safety

Safe water is needed for drinking, brushing teeth, washing fruits and vegetables and cooking. An emergency or widespread power outage may interrupt, or affect the safety of your current water supply.

Alternate Supplies

Bottled water – Use commercially sealed containers of water or store water in clean, labeled containers with tight fitting lids.

Well water – Obtain water from a groundwater supply if power is available to operate the pump.
Another municipal system – Import water from an unaffected municipal supply.

Hidden water sources in your home:

- Ice cubes
- Hot water tank – To use the water in your hot water tank, turn off the electricity or gas, and open the drain at the bottom of the tank. Shut off the water intake valve and turn on a hot water faucet.
- Plumbing pipes – Let air into the plumbing by opening the highest faucet in your home and draining the water from the lowest one.
- Toilet tank reservoir – The tank, not the bowl.

All water, except that from commercially sealed containers, must be treated before use.

Emergency Water Treatment

Boiling – Heat water to a vigorous rolling boil for 1 minute and cool before use.

Disinfection – Add 1.25mL (1/4 tsp) liquid bleach to 4.5L (1 gallon) of water, mix and let stand for 15 minutes.

- Use regular household bleach (5% sodium hypochlorite).
- Do not use scented bleach, bleach with added cleaners or alternative bleaches.

Reference: Modified with permission from The London Middlesex Health Unit



For more information, please call **1-800-660-5853**
or visit our website at **www.healthunit.org**