



# “Best By” Information

The FDA does **not** require manufacturers to place any dates on food products. Is this necessary?

**Best Before Date** - The “Best Before Date” is, according to the manufacturer, the last day by which a product’s flavor or quality is best, the optimal time of its shelf life for quality. The product may still be enjoyed after the “best before date.”

**Use By Date** - The “Use By Date” is the last day the manufacturer vouches for the product’s quality. The use by date is the date recommended for peak quality. The food may be enjoyed after the “use by date.”

**Sell By Date** - The “Sell By Date” on a product is the item’s expiration date, the end of its shelf life at the store. This is the last date the stores are supposed to display the product for sale. Although the food product may be used and enjoyed past this date, it is not recommended to purchase a product if the “sell by date” has passed.

You can still use products for the amount of time indicated below after the “Best Before,” “Use By,” and “Sell By” dates.

Keep shelf stable foods in a cool, dry place to extend shelf life.

**Bread:** Past Best By date, until sour or moldy. 6 months freezer

**Butter:** 1 month refrigerator, 6 months freezer

**Canned Goods:** 3 years in a cool, dry place

**Cereal:** 6 months

**Cheese:** shredded 1 week, hard block 6 months

**Cottage Cheese:** 5 days, 3 months frozen

**Cream:** 5 days, 2 months freezer

**Cream Cheese:** 3 weeks

**Dried beans:** indefinite

**Dried Fruits:** 6 months pantry, 1 year refrigerator, indefinite freezer

**Eggs:** 3 weeks

**Flours:** 6 months

**Frozen Meals:** 3 months

**Frozen Protein:** (beef, poultry, pork, fish) 2 years

**Granola Bars:** 6 months

**Herbs & Spices:** 1 year

**Hot Dogs:** 2 weeks refrigerator, 6 months freezer

**Ice Cream:** 1 month

**Jam/Jelly:** 6 months

**Juice:** 6 months

**Ketchup:** 1 year

**Lunch Meat:** Packaged 5 days

**Mayonnaise:** 3 months

**Milk:** 5 days after printed date

**Mustard:** 1 year

**Oatmeal:** 2 years

**Oils:** 1 year

**Frozen Fruit/Veg:** 1 year

**Olives:** 1 year

**Peanut Butter:** 1 year

**Pickles:** 1 year

**Popcorn:** Plain, indefinitely; microwave, 6 months

**Rice:** White 4 years, brown 6 months

**Salad Dressing:** Creamy 1 month, oil-based 3 months

**Salsa:** 1 months

**Shelf Stable Milk:** 3 months

**Snacks:** (chips, crackers) 2 weeks

**Sour Cream:** 1 week

**Tea:** 6 months pantry, 1 year freezer

**Tuna:** 2 years pantry

**Vinegar:** Indefinite

**Yogurt:** 1 week

