



SHELF-LIFE GUIDE for COMMON HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

(How long to keep common household items)

Do you know if the food on your shelves is still edible? Do you continue to drink milk past its expiration date until it tastes bad? The following shelf life guide is important information to have when starting any home organizing project. When determining shelf life, always first check the container for a manufacturer's expiration date or "use by" date.

According to the US Department of Agriculture, product dating isn't federally mandated (except for infant formula and some baby food). Also, retailers aren't legally required to remove food from shelves past the "sell by" date. It is the consumer's responsibility to be informed and make educated decisions about our purchases. Although you should always trust the shelf-life date on a package, keep in mind that there's a great variation with type of food, the temperature where it was stored, the original quality of the food, the amount of oxygen present and other factors.

The following information on food labeling and packaging will help you decipher what you read on packaging.

Sell by: this tells the store how long to display the product for sale. For best quality, people should buy the product before this date expires, but it doesn't necessarily mean the product is bad once it reaches this date.

"Best if used by (or before)": is recommended by the manufacturer for best flavor or quality. This is not a safety date, according to the USDA. If the "Best if used by" date says May 15, 2008 and today is May 16, it doesn't necessarily mean the product is bad once it reaches that date. In general, the products are still safe to eat, but some may detect changes in product flavor, color, taste or texture.

"Use by": the last date recommended to use the product, such as "Don't use after June 12, 2009. The manufacturer establishes this date.

"Closed" or coded dates are packing numbers or dates, so manufacturers know where and when the product was produced.

The manufacturer's dates on packages and canned goods are conservative and based more on quality than safety, according to a BYU food science professor. He also recommends tossing out any cans or jars that are bulging, heavily dented, cracked, have broken seals, loose lids or any compromise with the packaging.

Regulations on Make-up

According to Beauty and Wellness Expert Dayle Haddon in an article written by Brian Bernbaum for CBS News:

"Cosmetics aren't required by law to have expiration dates, so you can't just look at the label to know when a product has expired."

Is there a solution to this problem? When you purchase cosmetics, label the container with the purchase date so you'll know when it's getting old. Here are some general guidelines.

ITEM	SHELF LIFE
BEVERAGES	
COFFEE, gourmet - Beans: Ground: Canned ground: Instant:	3 weeks in paper bag, longer in vacuum-seal bag.** Unopened ground coffee is good for up to two years. Opened: 1 week in sealed container Unopened: 2 years. Opened: 1 month, refrigerated Unopened: Up to 2 years. Opened: Up to 1 month Once you've thawed frozen coffee, do not refreeze it.
DIET SOFT DRINKS IN PLASTIC BOTTLES	Unopened: 3 months from "best by" date. Opened: Doesn't spoil, but taste is affected.
JUICE, bottled apple or cranberry	Unopened: 8 months from production date. Opened: 7-10 days
SOFT DRINKS, regular	Unopened cans or glass bottles: 9 months from "best by" date. Opened: Doesn't spoil, but taste is affected.
TEA BAGS (Lipton)	Use within 2 years of opening the package.
BEER	Unopened: 4 months
FOOD ITEMS	
DRIED PASTA	12 months
FROZEN DINNERS	Unopened: 12-18 months
FROZEN VEGETABLES	Unopened: 18-24 months. Opened: 1 month
PEANUTS -	Unopened: 1-2 years unless frozen or refrigerated. Opened: 1-2 weeks in airtight container
PEANUT BUTTER, natural	9 months
PEANUT BUTTER, processed	Unopened: 2 years. Opened: 6 months; refrigerate after 3 months
PROTEIN BARS (Power Bars) -	Unopened: 10-12 months. Check "best by" date on package
RICE, white	2 years from date on box or date of purchase.
TUNA, canned	Unopened: 1 year from purchase date. Opened: 3-4 days, not stored in can
COOKING ITEMS	
BROWN SUGAR	Indefinite shelf life, stored in a moisture proof container in a cool, dry place
FLOUR	Unopened bags of white flour normally stay fresh for up to a year. Open a bag and it will keep for another 6 to 8 months
SUGAR, white granulated SUGAR: confectioner's	Unopened bags: 2 years, as long as they are kept cool and dry. Opened bags: 6 months. Unopened bag, up to 2 years as well.
CHOCOLATE (Hershey bar)	1 year from production date
EGGS:	In the absence of an expiration date stamped on the carton, if eggs are stored properly (in the refrigerator at 40 degrees Fahrenheit): 4 to 5 weeks past the packing date. To tell if an egg is too old to use, place it in a large glass of water so it has room to move around. If it falls over or stands up, it's safe for consumption. However, if it floats in the water, it's past its shelf life and you should throw it away.
MARASCHINO CHERRIES	Unopened: 3-4 years. Opened: 2 weeks at room temp, 6 months refrigerated.
MARSHMALLOWS	Unopened: 40 weeks. Opened: 3 months.
SPICES (See below for more tips on keeping spices fresh)	Unopened: indefinitely. Opened: 2-4 years.**

OILS & SHORTENING	Stored on cupboard shelves at room temperature: up to a year. Oils such as Sesame or Flaxseed should be refrigerated and not kept in your cupboard.
CONDIMENTS & SAUCES	
HONEY	Indefinite shelf life
KETCHUP	Unopened: 1 year. Opened or used: 4-6 months**
MAPLE SYRUP, real or imitation	1 year
MAYONNAISE	Unopened: Indefinitely Opened: 2-3 months from “purchase by” date. **
MUSTARD	2 years **
OLIVES, jar (green with pimento)	Unopened: 3 years. Opened: 3 months
OLIVE OIL	2 years from manufacture date **
PICKLES	Unopened: 18 months. Opened: No conclusive data. Discard if slippery or excessively soft.
SALAD DRESSING, bottled	Unopened: 12 months after “best by” date. Opened: 9 months, refrigerated
STEAK SAUCE	33 months. **
TABASCO	5 years, stored in a cool, dry place
SOY SAUCE, bottled	Unopened: 2 years. Opened: 3 months. **
VINEGAR	42 months
WINE (red, white)	Unopened: 3 years from vintage date; 20-100 years for fine wines. Opened: 1 week, refrigerated and corked.
WORCESTERSHIRE SAUCE	Unopened: 5-10 years. ** Opened: 2 years
HOUSEHOLD & AUTOMOTIVE PRODUCTS	
AIR FRESHENER - aerosol	2 years
ANTIFREEZE, premixed	1-5 years
ANTIFREEZE, concentrate	Indefinite
BATTERIES, alkaline	7 years
BATTERIES, lithium	10 years
BLEACH	3-6 months
DISH DETERGENT	1 year
FIRE EXTINGUISHER, non-rechargeable	12 years
FIRE EXTINGUISHER, rechargeable	Service or replace every 6 years
LAUNDRY DETERGENT	Unopened: 9 months -1 year. Opened: 6 months
METAL POLISH (silver, copper, brass)	At least 3 years
MIRACLE GRO, liquid	Opened: 3-8 years. Liquid, water-soluble: Indefinite
MOTOR OIL	Unopened: 2-5 years. Opened: 3 months
MR. CLEAN	2 years
PAINT	Unopened: Up to 10 years. Opened: 2-5 years
SPRAY PAINT	2-3 years
WINDEX	2 years

WOOD POLISH (Pledge)	2 years
MAKE-UP & BATH PRODUCTS	Replace outdated cosmetics regularly. Fresh makeup is more hygienic for the skin, especially eye products, which can develop bacteria rapidly
BAR SOAP	18 months - 3 years
BATH GEL, body wash	3 years
BATH OIL	1 year
BODY BLEACHES & DEPILATORIES	Unopened: 2 years. Opened: 6 months
BODY LOTION	3 years
CONCEALER	1 year
CONDITIONER	2-3 years
CREAM BLUSH	6 months - 1 year
DEODORANT	Unopened: 2 years. Opened: 1-2 years. For antiperspirants, see expiration date
EYE CREAM	Unopened: 3 years. Used: 1 year
EYE SHADOW	1 year
FACE LOTION	With SPF, see expiration date. All others, at least 3 years
FOUNDATION, oil-based	Unopened: 2 years; Opened: Liquid Foundation: 3-6 months (Cream foundation can last 4-6 months) Foundation in a bottle should last 3-6 months, but wide-mouthed jars can expose the product to more air and should be tossed sooner. It's time to purchase a new bottle when the ingredients begin to settle or separate, the texture thickens or thins, or the smell changes.
FOUNDATION, water-based	Unopened: 3 years
HAIR GEL	2-3 years
HAIR SPRAY	2-3 years
LIP BALM / GLOSS	Unopened: 5 years. Used: 1-2 years
LIPSTICK	2 years
MASCARA	Unopened: 2 years. Used: 3-4 months
MOISTURIZER	12-18 months
MOUTHWASH	3 years from manufacture date
NAIL POLISH	1 year
NAIL POLISH REMOVER	Lasts indefinitely
PENCIL - LIP or EYE	1 year
PERFUME	1-2 years
POWDER & POWDER BLUSH	2 years
RUBBING ALCOHOL	At least 3 years
SPF LOTION	1 year
SHAMPOO	2-3 years
SHAVING CREAM	2 years or more
TOOTH WHITENING STRIPS	13 months
WASH'N DRI MOIST WIPES	Unopened: 2 years. Opened: Good until dried out

** Items older than shelf life, color or flavor may be affected, but product is still generally safe to consume.

SPICE FRESHNESS: Tips to determine if Spices are still fresh:

- Check to see that the color of your spices and herbs is vibrant. If the color has faded, chances are so has the flavor.
- Rub or crush the spice or herb in your hand. If the aroma is weak and flavor is not apparent, it's time to replace it.
- Store herbs and spices in a tightly capped container, and keep away from heat, moisture, and direct sunlight. Replace bottle lids tightly immediately after use.
- To minimize moisture and caking, use a dry measuring spoon and avoid sprinkling directly into a steaming pot.
- Check the freshness date on the bottom or right side of the bottle to help keep track of when it is time to toss.

The above information was gathered from a variety of on-line sources. These guidelines are offered for information purposes.

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