

Food safety during a power failure

Power failures can result in foodborne illness risks from food spoiling due to a lack of temperature control. Follow these safe food handling tips during a power failure to reduce your risk.



Make a Plan

- Have a plan for how to keep your food at 4°C or lower. This plan might include backup power (generators or solar panels) or coolers and ice.
- Connect with your community to learn what resources are available (friends, family, Ottawa Community Housing, community associations). 2-1-1 can help direct you to resources nearby.
- Know the location of your community food banks
- Make an emergency food kit and rotate it so that food does not spoil. Choose low-sodium, low-sugar and whole grain shelf stable foods when possible:
 - Canned vegetables (low sodium)
 - Canned fruits (packed in water)
 - Cereal & crackers (whole grain)
 - Instant oatmeal
 - Legumes (low sodium canned, or dried)
 - Dry pasta (whole grain)
 - Couscous (whole wheat), bulgur
 - Rice (brown) or minute rice
 - Canned pasta sauce, stew, soup, chili, curry (low sodium)

- Canned fish
- Peanut butter
- Nuts and seeds
- Dried fruit
- Have a way to cook food that doesn't require electricity (BBQ, camp stove) and ensure you have fuel.

During an Outage

Use a thermometer to monitor the temperature of your food and make sure it stays cold (below 4°C/4°F).

Outages that last 4 hours or less

- Avoid opening your refrigerator and freezer.
- Add ice to help keep foods cold, especially if it's unclear how long the outage will last.

Outages that last between 4 hours and 2 days

- Pack your food on ice either in your fridge, freezer or in a cooler.
- Consider moving food to a friend's or family member's freezer if they have power or call 211 to ask about community fridges or food preparation spaces available near you.
- Make sure your raw meats won't leak as they thaw and contaminate other foods or surfaces. Clean and disinfect any areas that have been contaminated with juices from raw meats. Do not reuse these cloths until they have been cleaned and sanitized.
- Food that still contains ice crystals or has been kept at 4°C or lower can be refrozen. The quality may change; however, the food is still safe.
- Hazardous foods like raw and cooked meats, dairy products, prepared meals and cut fruit and vegetables will start to grow bacteria that can make you sick if they are kept above 4°C for more than 4 hours.



- Cook and eat the food that will spoil the fastest first.
 - o Food from the fridge will spoil before food from the freezer.
 - o Meats spoil before fruits and vegetables.
 - o Milk, cream and soft cheeses will spoil before hard cheeses, butter and yogurt
 - o Vegetables and fruits that are sliced will spoil before those that are kept whole.
 - o Condiments and spreads that are acidic will take longer to spoil.
 - o Breads, whole fruits and vegetables do not require refrigeration to be safe to eat.
 - o Cooked dishes and leftovers require refrigeration. They may contain bacteria that make toxins as they grow and these toxins cannot be killed by cooking or reheating the food.

- It is important to cook or reheat foods thoroughly and to check the internal temperature using a thermometer.
 - o Cook or reheat poultry and poultry dishes to 74°C
 - o Cook or reheat dishes with other meats to 71°C

Outages that last more than 2 days

- Move food to a friend's or family member's freezer if they have power or call 2-1-1 to ask about community fridges available near you.
- Check in with your neighbours who may need support if you have power and available storage space
- Continue to cook and eat food before it spoils.
- Consider sharing food and cooked meals with family members living outside of your home, friends and neighbours to reduce food waste and to leverage resources.
- Call 2-1-1 to ask about resources available in your community. There may be emergency centres that have been set up to provide hot meals, showers and charging stations.

Recovering after a power outage

If you are worried that you won't be able to replace your food that has spoiled, call 2-1-1 to find out what resources are available to you as well as a list of food banks in your neighbourhood.