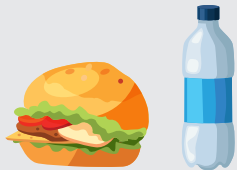


Best Before Date Timetable

See this resource and more at
secondharvest.ca/resource-library

Confusion around best before dates (BBDs) leads to a lot of good food being thrown away in Canada. A BBD estimates how long a product will maintain its peak freshness, flavour and nutritional value — **not whether it's safe to eat.**

BBDs are only required on foods that last 90 days or less. They are different than expiry dates. Many foods are still safe to eat after the BBD if they are unopened and stored properly. Remember: **"Best before" does not mean "bad after."** Before eating food past the BBD, use your senses to check for quality.

Food Group	Items & Examples	Consume By (Time past BBD)								
Produce & Breads, Fresh or Frozen 	Produce: Fruits and vegetables, herbs Breads: Bagels, buns, matzah, naan, pitas, tortillas	Any time, as long as there is no visible spoilage or decay, blemishes, mould or rotting smell								
Proteins & Dairy, Fresh or Frozen 	Raw Meat & Fish <table><tr><td>Ground meat</td><td>2-3 months</td></tr><tr><td>Fish</td><td>2-6 months</td></tr><tr><td>Poultry pieces</td><td>6 months</td></tr><tr><td>Beef, lamb, pork, whole poultry</td><td>1 year</td></tr></table> Other Proteins: Cooked luncheon meats, eggs, tofu Milk & Milk Products: Butter, cheese, ice cream, milk alternatives, sour cream, yogurt	Ground meat	2-3 months	Fish	2-6 months	Poultry pieces	6 months	Beef, lamb, pork, whole poultry	1 year	BBD or if frozen: 1 week 2 weeks or, if frozen, 2-3 months
Ground meat	2-3 months									
Fish	2-6 months									
Poultry pieces	6 months									
Beef, lamb, pork, whole poultry	1 year									
Shelf-Stable Products 	Canned Goods: Beans, chickpeas, evaporated milk, fish, fruits, meat, pastes, pickles, sauces, soups, spam, stews, vegetables Condiments: Jam, ketchup, margarine, mayonnaise, mustard, nut butters, oil, relish, salad dressing, sauces, spices, vinegar Shelf Stable & Dried Goods: Baby food, bagged snacks, cereal, crackers, energy bars, flour, granola bars, milk alternatives, nuts, oats, pasta, powdered milk, quinoa, rice, seeds	1 year								
Ready-to-Eat Foods & Drinks 	Fresh Meals & Baked Goods: Cakes, chocolate, cookies, danishes, deli salads, pies, pizzas, prepared meals, puddings, sandwiches Beverages: Coconut water, coffee (prepared), crystals, juice, sport/energy drinks, tea (prepared), water Frozen Sauces/Gravies Frozen and Microwavable Meals/Soups	72 hours or, if frozen, 1 month 3-6 months 6 months 1 year								

In Canada, only five products are required to have an expiry date and should not be consumed past their date label:

- Infant formula
- Meal replacements (Boost, Ensure, Glucerna, etc.)
- Nutritional supplements (vitamin D, etc.)
- Formulated liquid diets (used for medical purposes)
- Very low-energy foods (used for medical purposes)