

# Earthquake Food Safety

To keep food safe and to avoid food poisoning, know what foods to store before an earthquake and how to handle foods afterward.



## Prepare your food.

Because gas and electric power systems may be damaged during an earthquake, it is important to have food on hand that does not need refrigeration. Experts recommend at least a three day supply of food and water. Store one or two manual can openers with the emergency food supply or buy canned items with a tab. Use single-serving sizes because leftovers not kept chilled can lead to food poisoning.

Include:

- canned foods such as ready-to-eat canned meats, fruits and vegetables
- smoked or dried meats such as jerky
- juices—canned, powdered or crystallized
- soups—canned or dried; bouillon cubes
- milk—canned, dried, or shelf-stable cartons
- high-energy foods—peanut butter, jelly, crackers, nuts, trail mix, cereal, granola bars
- water—store at least one gallon of water per person per day (3 gallons per person)
- paper goods, utensils, trash bags, hand sanitizer
- non-perishable pet food if applicable

Check dates on all items and replace as needed.

For more information about food safety, visit [mfp.ucanr.edu](http://mfp.ucanr.edu) or your local University of California Cooperative Extension office.

## Post-emergency food safety.

After an earthquake, use food in the refrigerator first, then use frozen items.

- Food in the refrigerator is safe as long as the power is out no more than a few hours and the temperature in the refrigerator remains at 40 degrees Fahrenheit (40°F) or below.
- Food in a full, free-standing freezer will be safe for about two days at zero degrees Fahrenheit (0°F), a half-full freezer will be safe for about one day.
- If the freezer is not full, group packages together so they form an igloo shape, protecting each other.
- Group meat and poultry to one side or on a tray so their juices won't contaminate other foods if they begin to thaw.
- Foods that pose the greatest risk are:
  - ♦ meat and poultry
  - ♦ food containing milk, cream, sour cream, or soft cheese.

Do not rely on appearance or odor to determine whether a food is safe to eat. If perishable foods have been at room temperature for more than two hours, disease-causing bacteria may have multiplied enough to cause illness.

## When in doubt, throw it out!

For additional disaster preparedness information in English and Spanish, visit:

[asistel.org/](https://asistel.org/)



[ucfoodsafety.ucdavis.edu/Emergencies/  
Food Safety Information for  
Earthquakes](https://ucfoodsafety.ucdavis.edu/Emergencies/Food_Safety_Information_for_Earthquakes)

## What you do in your home and kitchen affects our health and water.

- Minimize the use of pesticides that pollute our waterways and harm human health.
- Use nonchemical alternatives or less toxic pesticide products whenever possible.
- Read product labels carefully and follow instructions on proper use, storage, and disposal.

