

# Labels

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## Food Safety – Labels

To help you enjoy your food at its best and avoid food poisoning, it's important to look out for some key food safety terms on food labels. This leaflet explains what some of the most important terms mean.

### Which terms should I look out for?

#### Use by

Don't use any food or drink after the end of the **Use by** date shown on the label. Even if it looks and smells fine, using it after this date could put your health at risk and cause food poisoning.

You will usually find a **Use by** date on food that goes off quickly, such as milk, soft cheese, ready-prepared salads and smoked fish.

It's also important to follow the **Storage instructions** (see next page), otherwise the food might not last until the **Use by** date. Usually food with a **Use by** date needs to be kept in the fridge.

#### Best before

It should be safe to eat food after the **Best before** date shown on the label, but the food will no longer be at its best. After the **Best before** date, the food might begin to lose its flavour and texture.

You will usually find a **Best before** date on foods that last longer, such as frozen, dried or canned foods.

However, you shouldn't eat eggs after the **Best before** date. This is because eggs can contain salmonella bacteria, which could start to multiply after the **Best before** date.



#### Eat within or Use within

Check the label for instructions such as **Eat within a week of opening**. It's important to follow these instructions. But remember – if the **Use by** date is tomorrow, then you must use the food by the end of tomorrow, even if the label says 'eat within a week of opening' and you have only opened the food today.



### What other food safety information is included on labels?

#### Sell by or Display until

These sorts of instructions are for shop staff to know when they should remove a product from sale.

#### Storage instructions

To make sure the food lasts until the **Use by** date, it's important to follow any storage instructions shown on the label, such as **Keep refrigerated**.

Make sure the fridge is cold enough. Aim to keep the coldest part of the fridge between 0°C and 5°C – you can use a fridge thermometer to check the temperature.



#### Preparation and cooking instructions

To enjoy your food and to avoid food poisoning, it's also important to follow any instructions for preparation and cooking shown on the label, including defrosting times.

The aim of the cooking instructions is to help you enjoy the food and to kill any harmful bacteria, which can be present naturally in some foods.

#### Does 'Use by' mean eat by?

**Use by** does not always mean you need to eat the food by the date shown. If the food can be frozen, then this will extend its life beyond the **Use by** date. Follow the instructions on the pack, such as **Freeze on day of purchase**.

Similarly, if you cook food before its **Use by** date, then you might be able to eat it after the **Use by** date. For example, if you are making a lasagne or pie with meat that has a **Use by** date of today, you can save the cooked lasagne or pie in the fridge and eat it tomorrow, but remember to reheat it thoroughly. Don't keep cooked food for more than two days (unless it's frozen) and never reheat food more than once.

