

# DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

## Meals Without Electricity



**During extended power outages, adequate nutrition is still important.** Put together nutritious meals, even when access to refrigeration or electric appliances is unavailable for days or weeks.

### Try to keep a normal routine

Continue to eat at regular times, and choose nutritious foods that cover a variety of food groups and include a mixture of colors.

### Use portable equipment safely

Camping stoves, gas stoves, or outdoor grills are useful appliances for preparing meals when the power is out. Be sure to use these safely.

### Meal planning without electricity

Visit [MyPlate.gov](https://www.myplate.gov) and use the model to help plan meals based on food groups. Also see meal ideas below that do not require power.

### Eat perishables first

If you think power is not returning for several hours or days, plan to eat perishable foods first and non-perishable foods later. Refer to Power Outage materials to learn how long foods can be stored and ways to use ice packs and coolers to extend the length of time foods can remain at safe temperatures.

### Use clean water

Wash hands before preparing food, and wash fresh fruits and vegetables before eating. During a power outage, drinking water should still be available. But if it is not, use bottles or jugs of water.

### Cook small to avoid leftovers

When refrigerators and freezers are not working, plan to cook in small batches as leftovers cannot be saved unless power returns soon after making a recipe.

Avoid opening multiple containers of canned or bottled foods, as many of these foods become perishable once opened.

### Learn which foods can safely remain unrefrigerated

For example, fresh, uncut fruits and vegetables can be stored at room temperature. Once cut, their leftovers need to be refrigerated.

If you have internet access, visit [foodsafety.gov](https://www.foodsafety.gov) or download the *FoodKeeper* app for full lists.

### Breakfast ideas



#### Dry cereal and milk with canned peaches

Use milk within 4 hours of power outage, or use powdered or ultra-high temperature milk.



#### Yogurt and fresh berries with granola

Use yogurt within 4 hours of when power went out. Wash berries with water before eating.



#### Avocado bread with applesauce

Top whole-grain bread with sliced avocados and black pepper; serve with canned applesauce.



#### Bagel and banana

Spread peanut butter on a whole-grain bagel and top with sliced bananas.



## Lunch ideas



### Salad and sandwich

Open and drain a can of chickpeas. Mash with avocado, onion, and dry spices. Serve on bread or crackers.

**Serve with:** A simple tomato and lettuce salad with vinegar-oil dressing. *Remember to wash all produce before eating.*



### Tuna and crackers

Drain canned or foil-packed tuna and eat with whole-grain crackers.

**Serve with:** Dehydrated veggie chips, such as beets, carrot, and sweet potato.



### Cold taco salad

Drain canned chicken, black beans, and corn. Mix with bottled salsa, and serve with tortillas or tortilla chips.

**Serve with:** Canned fruit, such as pineapple, mango, or tropical fruit mix.



### Easy lunch box

Munch on cheese sticks, whole-grain crackers, sliced bell pepper with shelf-stable ranch dressing cups, and raisins.

*Remember to wash bell peppers before eating.*

## Dinner ideas



### Deli sandwich wraps and fresh fruit

Add deli meat, cheese, veggies, and condiments to tortillas. Use deli meats, cheeses, and opened, refrigerated condiments within 4 hours of a power outage.



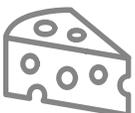
### Asian-inspired bulgur (wheat) salad

*Requires boiling water.* Cook bulgur by pouring boiled water over the bulgur and letting sit for 15 minutes. Mix in chopped almonds, canned apricots, canned chicken or beans, and chow mein noodles. Top with rice wine vinegar and oil.



### Cobb salad (egg-less option)

To a plate of lettuce, add canned chicken (drained), avocado slices, sliced tomato, and pre-cooked bacon bits. Serve with whole-wheat crackers. If hardboiled eggs are available, add them to the salad. *Remember to wash all produce before eating.*



### Picnic plate

Eat picnic-style with pieces of summer sausage, cheese, olives, nuts, pieces of dark chocolate, pita bread, snap peas, and mandarin oranges. Once packages are opened, use sausage, cheese, and olives within 4 hours of when power went out. *Remember to wash all produce before eating.*

## Snack ideas



### Celery and apple slices with peanut butter

Remember to wash all produce before eating.



### Grapes and jerky

Remember to wash all produce before eating.



### Trail mix of dried fruit, nuts, and dry cereal



### Tortilla chips and packaged salsa



## Food for power outages

When power is out, you can still prepare nutritious meals and snacks. For a complete list of emergency food pantry items, refer to [How to Build an Emergency Food Supply](#).

Keep all non-perishable items in a cool, dry location. Canned foods should be stored between 50 and 70 degrees and away from sunlight, damp areas, vents, pipes, and furnaces to avoid temperature fluctuations.

### Protein

Canned meats and fish (chicken, tuna, salmon) - Dried or canned beans, peas and lentils - Nut butter - Nuts and seeds - Dried meat

### Grains

Rice and pasta - Breads (English muffins, bagels, etc.) - Cereal and oats/oatmeal - Tortillas - Whole-grain crackers - Granola bars

### Fruits

Canned fruits packed in juice - Dried fruit - Fresh fruit with a longer shelf-life (apples, citrus)

### Vegetables

Canned vegetables low in sodium

### Dairy

Shelf-stable milk (aseptic or powdered)

### Other

Pet food - Infant formula, baby food - Bottled water (1 gallon/person/day) - Other bottled beverages or drink mixes - Canned soup, broth - Dried herbs and spices

## Call your local office

Contact your local Illinois Extension office with your food safety questions: [go.illinois.edu/FindILExtension](https://go.illinois.edu/FindILExtension)

## REFERENCES

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