

Keeping your health and well-being in the know

MyHealthTALK

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Courtesy of Asset Health

Spoiler Alert

be label conscious about perishables

There aren't hard-and-fast rules about how long a product is safe, unfortunately, only recommendations and suggestions. Always consider how the food has been stored (did your yogurt languish in the trunk of your car on a warm day because picking up that dry cleaning took much longer than you'd expected?) as well as its appearance (if it's slimy or foul-smelling toss it no matter what the date).

Here are some pointers to help make the call between "probably fine" and "hazardous" when it comes to food freshness labeling:

"Best by" means that before that date, the product has the highest guarantee of freshness and flavor – if stored properly – but won't necessarily go bad by that date. However, it may not be so delicious after the date if it's a dairy product or other fresh food.

"Use by" should be considered a strong recommendation, not a command to toss it. There are exceptions, such as deli meats, that should be discarded after the "use by" date.

"Sell by" tells the store when to pull the product. But it's probably safe to eat that yogurt within just a few days of the date as long as you kept the product cold almost constantly. If the "sell by" date is past and the pepperoni looks a little slimy, skip playing food-poisoning Russian roulette and toss it.

An **"expiration"** date is the last date the item should be eaten, unless you freeze it. Label frozen products with the date and follow the "first in, first out" rule.

"Use it or lose it"

Yogurt, sour cream and cheese	Milk and cream	Eggs	Fresh Meats
Use up to three days past the "sell by" date, if kept refrigerated.	Use by the "sell by" date, if kept refrigerated.	Use up to three to five weeks from the purchase date, if kept refrigerated.	Use within a few days of the purchase date, or freeze (except cured ham, which lasts 5-7 days).

Source: Natural Health Magazine, April/May 2011

Spring Harvest

Your nearby market is the perfect place to find the freshest locally grown fruits, vegetables, and flowers. You can also find eggs, honey, and freshly baked bread. It's a feast for your eyes and your stomach!

Available items will change from Spring to Summer to Fall and it's exciting to see what's available each week. Many of the foods are grown organically and you are supporting local merchants with your purchases.

May Featured Vegetable: ASPARAGUS

The bright green color of fresh asparagus reminds you that winter veggies are on their way out. Asparagus is one of the earliest local vegetables to become available in the spring. It's also one of the healthiest things you can eat. Asparagus contains no fat, no cholesterol, and is very low in sodium. It's also very easy to cook. Rinse the asparagus and trim off the woody ends. You can steam, boil, grill or microwave it until just tender. Don't overcook it.

To pick a good bunch of asparagus, hold it up to your ear and lightly squeeze and twist. If the stalks squeak when rubbed together it means they're fresh. The tips should be closed and compact.

You can eat it as is or toss it in a salad, stir fry, or scrambled eggs. Be creative.





It's Time for Spring Cleaning!

Here are some ideas for making your own natural cleaning products that will save you money, simplify your cleaning routine and help protect the planet.

Be sure to test a small area first, especially on rugs and carpets, which could stain permanently.

General Cleaning – Use a mix of white vinegar and water to remove dirt and germs. You can use this mixture to clean windows, floors and counter tops. Add a sprinkle of baking soda for scouring power to clean toilets, sinks and bathtubs.

All purpose disinfectant – Mix two teaspoons borax, four tablespoons white vinegar and three cups hot water in a spray bottle. To cut through kitchen counter grime, add one-quarter teaspoon liquid soap to the mixture.

Furniture Polish – Mix a one to one ratio of olive oil and white vinegar to clean and polish wood furniture.

Oven Cleaner – Make a paste using one cup baking soda and water. Apply to grimy spots and let stand. Lift off large deposits with a spatula and scrub surface with a scouring pad.

Windows – Mix three tablespoons of white vinegar with one quart of water in a clean spray bottle. If the windows are really dirty, mix a half teaspoon of liquid soap with three tablespoons of vinegar and two cups of water. To get streak free windows, use recycled newspaper rather than paper towels to wipe them clean.

Carpeting and Rugs – To absorb odors and clean carpet naturally, sprinkle baking soda over the surface of the carpet and let stand for fifteen to thirty minutes before vacuuming. For a heavy duty carpet cleaner, make a paste from one quarter cup each of salt, vinegar, and borax. Rub into the spot and let dry before vacuuming.

Metal Cleaners – Use sliced lemons to clean the tarnish from brass, copper, and aluminum. For extra dirty jobs, sprinkle the item with baking soda and then rub with lemon.

Drain Cleaner – Pour one half cup of baking soda down the drain, followed by one cup vinegar. Let the mixture sit for fifteen minutes and then rinse with hot water. For tough clogs, use the same mixture but allow it to sit overnight before rinsing.

Mold Cleaner – Mix one half cup of borax in one gallon of hot water. Spray on and wipe off. Scrub mildew spots with a mixture of borax and water and a scouring pad.

Source: *How to Make Your Own Green Cleaners* by Jean Savedge

Q & A: Food Allergies

What is a food allergy?

Food allergy occurs when the immune system attacks a food protein by mistake. Ingestion of the offending food may trigger the sudden release of chemicals, including histamine, causing the symptoms of an allergic reaction. A food allergy can be potentially fatal.

What are the common symptoms of a reaction?

Symptoms may include one or more of the following: a tingling sensation in the mouth, swelling of the tongue and the throat, difficulty breathing, hives, vomiting, abdominal cramps, diarrhea, drop in blood pressure, loss of consciousness, and even death. Symptoms typically appear within minutes to two hours after the person eats the allergy-causing food.

What is the best treatment for food allergy?

Strict avoidance of the allergy-causing food is the only way to avoid a reaction. Reading ingredient labels for all foods is critical to avoid a reaction. Epinephrine, also called adrenaline, is the most common choice for controlling a severe reaction. It is available by prescription as a self-injectable device. Individuals that have been prescribed this medication typically carry it at all times.

What is the difference between food allergy and food intolerance?

Food intolerance does not involve the immune system and is not life-threatening. Lactose intolerance (trouble digesting the milk sugar lactose), is a common example. In comparison, a food allergy occurs when the immune system reacts to a certain food. When the body creates antibodies that react with the allergy-causing food, histamine and other chemicals are released causing symptoms of an allergic reaction.

Myth: Adults don't develop new food allergies.

Fact: Food allergies can develop at any age.

Myth: One little bite is okay.

Fact: Even trace amounts can cause a severe reaction for a person with a food allergy.

Myth: A food can be made less allergenic by cooking it.

Fact: Heat doesn't make food less allergenic. The exception to this is sometimes seen with egg and milk allergy; some individuals with egg allergy are able to consume egg or milk that has been extensively heated and in smaller amounts, such as in baked goods.

Source: www.foodallergy.org