

# Food Advice Best Before and Use by Dates

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Under the Food Labelling Regulations 1996, most pre-packed foodstuffs must carry a date of minimum durability. This can be either a 'best before' date or a 'use by' date. These date marks must be in a prominent place on the label, If this is difficult, the manufacturer must state where the date can be found, for example "best before: see date on lid".

## Use By Dates

A "Use By" date is used for food which is highly perishable and is likely, after a short period of time, become an immediate danger to human health. Examples would be cooked meats and some ready prepared meals. Use By dates are made up of either a day and month or a day, month and year.

**It is an offence to sell or display for sale any food after its Use By date.**

## Best Before Dates

Foods with a longer shelf life must be labelled with a "Best Before" date. This is the date up to which the manufacturer claims that the food should remain at its best condition, providing it has been properly stored.

- Food which can be expected to keep for 3 months or less may be marked with a day and a month only, e.g. Best before 20 November.
- Food which will keep more than 3 months may be marked with a month and year only e.g. Best Before end November 2005
- Food which will keep 18 months may be marked with a year only, e.g. Best Before end 2005.

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## **What about food sold after the Best Before date?**

Food can be sold after its Best Before date, as long as it is still of satisfactory quality and the Best Before date is still visible – and the fact that these foods are often then reduced in price is very popular with some consumers.

By selling the food after its Best Before date, the retailer takes responsibility for the quality of the food and therefore may commit an offence if the food is not of the quality the customer expects.

## **Getting Further Information**

Enforcement in respect of Use by and Best Before dates are generally dealt with by our Trading Standards Team, who can be contacted on 01633 647624 or by e-mailing them at [trading.standards@torfaen.gov.uk](mailto:trading.standards@torfaen.gov.uk)