



# Family & Consumer News

Dear Consumers:

Summer is rapidly coming to a close. School doors are opening this month so families will begin a new year. We are still experiencing summer heat with afternoon storms and a few power outages. This letter has information to help families transition into a new routine. Remember to contact the office with consumer questions.

Sincerely,

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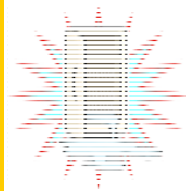
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## PROTECT YOUR FOOD DURING A POWER OUTAGE



Summer weather brings thunder storms and we have been experiencing our share. Although the rain is welcome, these storms often cause a power outage. Although most electricity is restored fairly quickly, you may find yourself without power for several hours. Consumers risk losing food stored in the refrigerator and freezer during long periods of power loss and it can have a significant drain on your wallet if you have to replace all that food. If you find yourself in a situation where the power is out, USDA has recommendations you can take to safeguard your refrigerated and frozen food.

If the power fails, do not open the freezer. I know it is hard to resist, but keep the door closed! Our first instinct is to check on the food, but opening the door will raise the internal temperature and speed up thawing. Food stays

frozen longer if the freezer is full, well insulated and located in a cool area. A half-filled freezer will keep foods frozen only about 24 hours. Cover the freezer with blankets to help hold in the cold; but don't cover the air vent.

If power is not to be resumed within one to two days or if the freezer is not back to normal operation in that time, use dry ice to keep the temperature below freezing and to prevent deterioration of spoilage of frozen foods. To locate dry ice, check with companies that transport food. When dry ice is obtained quickly after a power interruption, 50 pounds of dry ice should keep the temperature of food in a full 20 cubic freezer below freezing for three to four days.

### Refreezing Thawed Food

The first rule of thumb is, "When in doubt, throw it out." It is not unusual for me to get calls each summer concerning a freezer crisis and half frozen food. Some partially thawed

foods can be refrozen; however, the texture will not be as good.

Extension Specialist in food safety recommends the following:

**Meat** - Refreeze meat and poultry only if the temperature is 40°F or below and if the color and odor are good. Check each package and discard if signs of spoilage such as an off color or odor are present.

**Vegetables** - Refreeze only if ice crystals are still present or if the freezer temperature is 40°F or below.

**Fruit** - Refreeze if they show no signs of spoilage. Thawed fruits may be used in cooking or making jellies, jams and preserves. Fruits survive thawing with the least damage to quality.

**Cooked foods and shell fish** - Refreeze only if ice crystals are still present or the freezer is 40°F or below. If the condition is questionable, throw the food out.

**Ice cream** - If partially thawed, throw it out. The texture after thawing is not acceptable. If its

temperature reaches above 40°F it could be unsafe.

During the summer months, it may be a good practice to lower the temperature of your freezer to make sure food is frozen and at a colder temperature. This will give you more time if the power does fail.

Source: USDA

## STAY HYDRATED IN HOT WEATHER



Although we are looking at the end of Summer, the heat and humidity levels will be with us for several more months. We tend to forget how quickly a person can become dehydrated. During these sets of high temperatures, you need to be cautious about dehydration which can lead to serious complications. Water, an essential nutrient, is the best and easiest choice to keep hydrated during summer heat.

Drinking water throughout the day is especially important in our hot Florida weather. Normal everyday activity will produce a loss of 8 to 12 cups of water per day; this loss needs to be replaced. Experts suggest men need 12 cups of fluids daily and women need about 9 cups. Many factors, however, play a role and may increase the need for more water. Exercise, hot weather, caffeine and alcohol will increase fluid loss, which means you need to increase

your intake of fluid.

Nutritionists recommend most of your fluid needs should be met by drinking water. To ensure an adequate amount, drink a minimum amount of 8 cups of water each day. The rest of your fluid requirements can be met from other food sources like 100% juice and milk. Even fruits and vegetables can help hydrate, watermelon for example is an excellent source of water. Be aware, however, caffeinated beverages (tea and coffee) and soda do not increase your body fluid because the caffeine in these drinks acts as a diuretic and actually causes a water loss.

Keeping hydrated is as simple as drinking plain water from the tap. Drink water throughout the day to maintain a fluid balance. Getting an adequate daily intake of water is as important to a balanced diet as eating a variety of foods from all of the food groups. Extension Specialist suggest the following:

- Start your day drinking a glass

of water.

- Carry water with you at all times; drink frequently.
- Use water fountains in public places, take a drink whenever you see one.
- For every cup of caffeinated coffee, tea or soda, drink a cup of water.
- If you have a choice, drink decaffeinated coffee, tea or soda, do so.
- In a restaurant, order a glass of water with a lemon instead of a caffeinated drink.
- Drink a glass of water before each meal or snack.
- For a refreshing dessert, add a scoop of low-fat sorbet to seltzer water.

Reference: UF Extension

## BACK-TO-SCHOOL LUNCH FROM HOME



Before August is over, the school bells will ring and the lunch-packing season begins. August heat makes the back-to-school lunchbox particularly

vulnerable to bacteria that causes foodborne illness. Here are a few tips when packing school lunches:

### Safety Tips

- ◆ Prepare lunches the night before and let the items get thoroughly cold—either in the

refrigerator or the freezer.

- ◆ Pack lunches in an insulated lunch box. An acceptable substitute is a double-bagged paper bag. The two layers keep the cold inside longer and help prevent the bag from getting

soggy.

- ◆ Add a cold source, such as a freezer gel—or frozen juice box. Pack perishables, including deli meats, poultry or egg sandwiches, between these cold items.
- ◆ At school, lunch boxes and bags should be kept away from heat

sources, such as direct sunlight. Refrigerate, if possible.

- ◆ Finally, don't let dirty hands undo all your good work. Pack hand wipes or a hand sanitizer along with the lunch. That way, even if kids "forget" to wash their hands before eating, they'll open the lunchbox to a

friendly reminder.

Reference: SDA, and Family Nutrition in Action

## THINK BEFORE YOU SPEND



Most of us at some time or another will buy something on the spur of the moment, without a plan or thought. Credit cards help make this practice easy. Money experts estimate that only three out of ten purchases are decided upon in advance, while about half of all purchases are made completely on impulse.

Think of the times you go to the store for one or two items in mind and check out with a full cart. Or you run to a mall on the weekend just to look and leave with a trunk full of sale items. After all, it's a bargain if you never wear it. Or so that little voice inside would have you believe.

It takes a new shopping strategy to gain control of that compulsive habit we call impulse buying. A shopping list is essential whether it is a mental one or a well thought out written plan. Your grocery list as well as your household supplies, gifts, clothing, appliance or home furnishings list should allow some flexibility so you can switch and save, but it is a guide to keep you on track with your purchases.

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Economics Specialist suggest you ask yourself three basic questions to help you separate impulse buying from planned buying.

1. **Do I need it?** The answer to this question can immediately eliminate impulse buying.
2. **Will I use it?** The answer to this question can be misleading. It is easy to convince yourself that you will use most anything, but further analysis will help clarify the answer. Add the questions: "How will I use it?" and "How soon will I use it?"
3. **Can I afford it?** This probably is the true test. You can answer this question by asking another. "What will I have to give up if I buy this item now? The answer to these questions separates impulse items from necessities. They tell if you can have those things you could live without but that would be more fun to have.

**To avoid the drain that is caused by impulse buying:**

- ✓ **Shop alone.** It is usually easier to say no to yourself than to a spouse, child or

friend.

- ✓ **Shop when you are refreshed.** If you are tired, you won't be as willing to take time to compare prices, to consider uses and to answer the three questions that week out impulse buying.
- ✓ **Shop for food when you are not hungry.** Hungry shoppers tend to buy more.
- ✓ **Shop less often.** Consumers who have difficulty controlling impulse buying can avoid the temptation by making fewer shopping trips.
- ✓ **Shop sales, but be alert!** Just because it is on sale does not mean it is a good buy for you or your family. Answer the three questions about sale items. Modify your shopping behavior to eliminate impulse buying from your spending patterns.

## PLAN AHEAD FOR INCAPACITY



Although we hate to think about it, at some point in our lives, we may have to rely on other people to handle our affairs. It is more likely to happen to elderly as their health

declines, but younger people may find themselves in a situation due to an unexpected accident or illness.

A number of legal documents are available to assist during these periods; some provide temporary help, others offer more permanent

assistance. Planning ahead enables you to make important decisions about how your personal and financial affairs will be handled if you are unable to manage.

Consider:

- End of life decisions you might face.
- How can you prepare for the potential of mental or physical incapacity?
- What planning tools, including the creation of legal documents are available?
- Long term care, guardianship designation, power of attorney and dispersal of property and household items.
- Designate an executor to execute the last will and testament.
- Issues regarding heroic measures to prolong life and

wishes for organ donation. Discuss the issues with your family or a person you trust. Early discussion helps to avoid decisions that are in opposition to one's lifestyle and wishes, as well as decisions that are unacceptable to family members.

#### **Advanced Directives**

This is a written document signed in advance, which gives specific instructions regarding healthcare treatment. It may name someone to make such healthcare decisions for you, if you are unable to speak for yourself. Advance directive usually takes the form of a

living will, healthcare surrogate or durable power of attorney.

Putting things in order and having a written plan ahead of time will make it easy on you and relatives if circumstances arise and you are incapacitated. An attorney can assist you with all of the necessary documentation. Thinking ahead and having a written plan will make things run smoothly if you are unable to handle your personal affairs.

Source: UF Extension

## **SCHOOL CAN BE A STRESSFUL TIME FOR KIDS**



Most adults think a child's life is easy—wait until they grow up and have to get out in the real world. The reality is that childhood is full of stress and any change or transition can make life uneasy for your school-age child.

Usually stress is greatest during the beginning days and weeks of the new school year. Parents are very important in helping children manage stress and get off to a good start in school.

When school begins, it is a change of routine with new challenges. Whether it's kindergarten, middle school or high school, your child is on the brink of something big; anxious about leaving familiar comforts and starting something new.

Stress can be bad or good. We really can't go through life without some stress. It can be good when it motivates us to do our best or energizes us to try new things. Stress is bad when it becomes overwhelming and renders a person unable to deal with the pressures.

With too much stress, children may become anxious and fearful. Too much stress can create

problems with their physical and mental health, their relationships with their peers, and their school performance.

#### **Signs of Stress:**

- ✓ Headaches
- ✓ Stomach aches
- ✓ Nightmares or bad dreams
- ✓ A noticeable change in behavior such as withdrawing or being more aggressive than usual
- ✓ Crying or temper tantrums
- ✓ Eating disorders, drug or alcohol abuse (in older children)
- ✓ Withdrawing from friends, spending excessive time on the Internet, focusing on unusual interests or cultures

Supportive families and teachers can make the transition to school easier for children of all ages. There are several things families can do to prevent stress, no matter the child's age.

Help children prepare for the change. Children are less fearful when they know what to expect. Many schools now help parents and students get ready by offering open houses. Go to the school for special programs and keep in touch with teachers on a regular basis.

Talk about school Help your children talk about the day by

asking simple questions. If you have a teenager, be there when they are ready to talk.

Keep normal house routines. Give children a safe, predictable, and stable routine. This helps them know what to expect of the day and evening.

Encourage your children to keep old friends and make new ones. For middle school students, starting with a friend makes the change easier. Children who are able to make new friends also do better adjusting to school.

Be positive. Help children see the upcoming changes as exciting and fun (but don't deny that a child feels uncertain). Thinking and being positive helps children and adults deal with stress better.

Spend time together. Do things you enjoy and have fun; schedule regular family meetings to get ready for the week at school and work. Do something to make your child feel special.

Help kids develop coping skills. Children who know how to solve problems are better able to handle the difficulties they are bound to face when they enter school. Parents can help their children think things through and learn to get help when needed.

Follow these suggestions for

helping children manage the stress associated with starting school.

**Manage your own stress.** Children often pick up on their parents' anxiety and this becomes another stressor.

**Stay calm.** When under stress, children and parents need to try to stay calm. Take deep breaths. You can get through it and tell yourself and your child that things will be ok.

**Communicate and be available.** Listen to your children and teenagers when they talk. Show your love and acceptance and

avoid criticizing them.

**Seek help if needed.** Most children feel anxious the first days of school. If these feelings continue and the child is having nightmares, headaches or stomachaches, or wants to come home during the day, there may be a more serious problem. Consult your family doctor for professional advice.

Parents need to watch out for signs of stress in their children and do what they can ahead of time to prevent it. Parents can also help their children to manage stress by

talking things over, thinking things through, relaxing and helping children build a strong network of caring friends.

Source: Dr. Suzanna Smith, UF Extension Specialist

## MAKE HOMEWORK A FAMILY PROJECT



Now that school is back in session, homework is going to be a nightly ritual in many homes.

Although children and parents often dread it, homework provides an important opportunity for children to practice what they have learned in school. At home, they can get more in-depth information, apply skills learned more broadly, obtain important learning and organizational skills, and learn how to work independently with self-discipline. Homework can also provide an opportunity for parents to get a sense of what their children are doing in school, how well they are doing, and enhance their relationship with their children.

Heidi Radunovich, UF/IFAS Extension Specialist in Family Development offers the following suggestions:

**Set a regular family quiet time for working.** It helps to set aside time in the afternoon or evening for study, reading and homework. Regardless of whether or not children have homework assigned, everyone in the family should participate in this work time, and children without homework should use the time to read or review school lessons.

**Find a good location.** It is helpful to set aside a comfortable place in the home where your child can do

homework, such as a desk or a kitchen table with a chair. Make sure you have good lighting at the location. Younger children will need more assistance with and monitoring of their homework, so picking a spot that is within easy view, so you can be available to assist.

**Minimize distractions.** Turn off the TV and make video games off-limits during homework time. Although some children seem to enjoy working while listening to music, there is some evidence to suggest that even music can be distracting. If you do let children listen to music while working, make sure that the music is quiet, and not distracting to other children who are working.

**Express interest and enthusiasm in your child's homework.** Ask about the assignment, and express interest in the topic. Talk to your child about how to tackle the assignment and what it means. Children will be more interested and enthusiastic about their homework if you show interest and enthusiasm. Posting work that received good grades on the refrigerator, or keeping a folder with special work in it shows children that you are interested and care about their work.

**Set a good example.** Children watch what we do, and if we model good study skills, read, and organize our time well, our children will learn

from our example.

**Give praise and encouragement.** Homework can be tiring and frustrating, so make sure to praise children for their efforts, even if they are struggling. Give children the message that they are capable of doing the homework and that you believe in them. If necessary, encourage them to take short breaks after they finish smaller tasks so that they don't get too fatigued or restless.

**Don't do your child's homework!** Although it may be tempting at times, it is important for children to do the work themselves. Not only do they not learn if you do the work for them, it gives them the message that you think they can't do it, or they are not important enough to take the time to help with homework. Start your homework routine this week to get everyone off to the right start for a successful school year.

Source: Dr. Heidi Radunovich, UF Extension Specialist