

# Prolonged power outages and your health

## Community information

**This document contains information about how to stay safe during prolonged power outages.**

### **You can travel to stay with family or friends.**

If a power outage impacts your health or safety, or the health or safety of someone you live with, you can travel to accommodation like a hotel or a friend or family member's house, you can also travel to community relief services and community meetings.

### **Using portable power generators**

Portable generators can allow some normal activities to continue; however, it is important to use them carefully. Petrol or diesel powered generators can produce carbon monoxide gas so **must only be operated in a well-ventilated outdoor area** away from open windows and vents.

Carbon monoxide is invisible and you cannot smell it. If it builds up in a home, garage or caravan it can cause sudden illness, loss of consciousness and death. Think about your pets as well as your family.

**Do not use appliances designed for outdoor use inside a home**, basement, garage, caravan or tent, or even outside near an open window. Appliances such as power generators, grills, camp stoves or other petrol, LP gas, natural gas or charcoal-burning devices should only be used as specified by the manufacturer.

### **Food safety**

Food safety is important during power outages. Once cold or frozen food is no longer cold to touch, it can be kept and eaten for up to four hours and then it must be thrown away.

Eat hot food within four hours of it being hot or throw it away.

If available, put bagged ice under food packages and trays stored in freezers and fridges.

Only open fridge and freezer doors when absolutely necessary, this will keep the food and air temperature colder for longer.

### **Managing your medications**

Some medicines need to be refrigerated between +2°C and +8°C or their effectiveness can deteriorate. These can include vaccines, insulin, thyroxine tablets, immune therapies, some eye drops, some hormone products and some antibiotic mixtures for children.

If the power has been off for a prolonged period and you are concerned about the quality of your medicines you should discard them unless it is essential to your immediate health (e.g. insulin).

Some medicines, such as insulin, which are normally refrigerated can be kept at room temperature (below 25°C) for a specified number of days while you are using them. See the Consumer Medicines Information for the product.

If you are concerned about a particular medicine, contact your pharmacist or doctor or contact Health Direct on 1800 022 222 for guidance.

## Health emergencies triple zero

We are aware that there are still many in the community who are without power and communications so we are encouraging everyone in the community to check-in on others: look after those most at risk– your neighbour living alone, the elderly, the young, and people with a medical condition.

If there is a medical emergency and you are unable to call triple zero (000). You should travel to your closest hospital.

## Translated information

- [Food safety after a power outage \[https://bit.ly/3wpsOWR\]](https://bit.ly/3wpsOWR)
- [Using alternative fuel and generators safely during a power outage \[https://bit.ly/3pSvB8p\]](https://bit.ly/3pSvB8p)

More information on [www.healthtranslations.vic.gov.au](http://www.healthtranslations.vic.gov.au).

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