

# Advantages and Disadvantages of Convenience Foods

**Resource:** Fact Sheet  
**Topic Area:** Procurement  
**Subtopic Area:** Purchasing

## Introduction

Convenience foods are items that are partially or entirely prepared by the manufacturer before they are purchased. It is important to know the pros and cons of using these items when buying and preparing nutritious meals and snacks.

## Application

What are the advantages of using convenience items?

- Saves time
- Provides product consistency
- Requires less labor, thought, and effort
- Lists nutrition information on the product label

What are the disadvantages of using convenience items?

- Costs more
- Often higher in sodium and fat
- Cannot control the ingredients

## Tips for Success

- Think about the advantages and disadvantages of using convenience foods.
- Use the Nutrition Facts Label to determine the most nutritious products.
- Cook convenience foods the healthiest way. For example, do not add salt to the water when you boil noodles.
- Determine if additional foods are needed to meet the Child and Adult Care Food Program meal pattern requirements.
- Determine the cost per serving for each child to help control costs.
- Check the packaging dates for added value:
  - o A “sell-by” date tells the store how long to display the product for sale. You should buy the product before the date expires.
  - o A “best if used by (or before)” date is recommended for best flavor or quality. It is not a purchase or safety date.
  - o A “use-by” date is the last date recommended for the use of the product while at peak quality. The manufacturer of the product has determined the date.

## Reference

Institute of Child Nutrition. (2014). *Family child care fundamentals*. University, MS: Author.

This project was funded using U.S. Department of Agriculture grant funds.

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Suggested Reference Citation:

Institute of Child Nutrition. (2020). *Advantages and disadvantages of convenience foods*. University, MS: Author.

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