

# USDA's Nutrition Assistance Programs: Eat Right When Money's Tight

FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICE

SEPTEMBER 2008



## CHECK OUT:

- MyPyramid at [www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov) for personalized eating plans, advice to make smart choices from every food group and help to balance food and physical activity.
- *Loving Your Family Feeding Their Future* at [www.foodstamp.nal.usda.gov](http://www.foodstamp.nal.usda.gov). It is available in English and Spanish and provides menus, recipes, and tips on buying and serving healthier foods.
- Recipe Finder at <http://recipefinder.nal.usda.gov> for over 100 low cost, nutritious and delicious recipes in both English and Spanish.
- Food Stamp Program pre-screening tool at [www.foodstamps-step1.usda.gov](http://www.foodstamps-step1.usda.gov) to see if you may qualify for food stamp benefits and how much you might receive.
- Location of your nearest food stamp office at [www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/outreach/default.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/outreach/default.htm)

## Now More Than Ever, USDA's Nutrition Assistance Programs Can Help.

Many families are concerned about the rising costs of food. Read on for tips for how to stretch your food dollars through budgeting, food selection, and low-cost recipes. If you are struggling to put food on the table, USDA's nutrition assistance programs may help.



**Use foods you already have to plan menus. Add missing foods to your shopping list.**

## How Much: \$\$ Available For Food

- Know the resources you have to spend on food.
- Make a shopping list based on the resources you have to spend.
- Buy only the amounts of fresh foods you can use before it spoils.
- Consider frozen or shelf stable items that last longer.

## Planning: Making Meals With Foods On Hand

Before going to the grocery store, check what foods you already have.

Once you know what foods you have, ask these questions:

- What meals and recipes can I make using the foods I have?

- Can I mix foods together to make a tasty and nutritious meal?

- What foods does my family need for good health?

Then:

- Plan what recipes you will make using your list of foods.

- Use other foods on your list such as vegetables, fruits, and whole grains to complete the menu.

- Once you plan your menus, make a new list for missing foods you need to buy.

*~Turn the page for more tips on low-cost, healthy shopping.*



*Fruits and vegetables are usually less expensive when they are in season. Farmer's Markets always carry what is in season.*



*Look for bargains on day old bread. It costs less but is still nutritious.*

# Shopping: Before, During, and After

## Before Shopping

- Make a shopping list. This helps you stick to your budget.
- Plan your meals. Planning helps put leftovers to good use.
- Look for coupons, sales and store specials.
- For added savings sign up for the store discount card.

## During Shopping

- Don't shop when you are hungry. It is easier to stick to your shopping list.
- Try store brands. They usually cost less.
- Compare products for the best deal.
- Check sell by dates. Buy the freshest food possible. It lasts longer.

## After Shopping

- Store food right away to preserve freshness.
- Freeze food to prevent spoiling.
- Divide foods into small portions for children and elderly to prevent waste.
- Use foods with the earliest expiration dates first.

## Tips: Best Buys for Cost and Nutrition

### Breads and Grains

- Look for bargains on day old bread. It costs less but is still nutritious.
- Buy regular rice, oatmeal and grits instead of instant to save on money, sugar and calories.

### Vegetables and Salad

- Buy large bags of frozen vegetables. Seal tightly in the freezer between uses.
- Avoid pre-bagged salad mixes. They are usually more expensive and spoil faster.

### Fruits

- Buy fresh fruits in season, when they generally cost less.
- Frozen and canned fruits are a smart choice all year round.

### Low-Fat Milk Products

- Buy fresh, low-fat milk in the largest size that can be used before spoiling. Larger containers cost less than smaller sizes.
- Ultra-pasteurized milk has a longer expiration date and won't spoil as fast.

### Meat and Beans

- Chuck or bottom round roast has less fat and is cheaper than sirloin.
- Dried beans and peas are a good source of protein and fiber. They last a long time without spoiling.
- Look for specials at the meat counter. Buy meat on sale for big savings.
- Buy meat in large bulk packages to save money. Freeze portions you might not use right away to prevent spoiling.



**USDA's nutrition assistance programs provide assistance to millions of American households struggling to balance their budgets.**



**For more information, visit the Food Stamp Nutrition Connection Web site.**

## Additional Resources

### USDA Nutrition Assistance Programs Can Help Make Ends Meet

You may qualify for more than food stamp benefits. If you get food stamps and have children in school, they qualify for free lunch and breakfast. If you are low-income and pregnant, breastfeeding, a new mom or have children under five years old, you might qualify for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) benefits. The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) is a Federal program that provides food to low-income persons. Please read on for more information on these programs.

#### Food Stamp Program:

- *For:* Eligible low-income people and their families.
- *For More Information call* **1-800-221-5689**.
- To find your nearest food stamp office visit:  
**[www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/outreach/default.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/outreach/default.htm)**

#### WIC- Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children:

- *For:* Eligible low-income pregnant or breastfeeding women, new moms, and children under age 5.
- *For More Information visit:*  
**[www.fns.usda.gov/wic/contacts/tollfreenumbers.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/contacts/tollfreenumbers.htm)**

#### School Nutrition Program:

- *For:* Eligible low-income school-aged children.
- *For More Information:* Contact your local school or school district.

#### The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP):

- *For:* Eligible low-income persons.
- *For More Information visit:*  
**[www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/tefap/tefap\\_eligibility.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/tefap/tefap_eligibility.htm)**

### Resources for Food Stamp Program Partners and Educators

The Food Stamp Nutrition Connection (FSNC) is an online resource center which contains a wealth of information on healthy eating, using your food dollar wisely, and over 100 low cost recipes. Visit FSNC at:

**<http://foodstamp.nal.usda.gov>**



In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability.

To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W. Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.