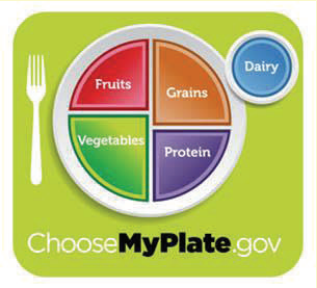
USDA's Nutrition Assistance Programs: Eat Right When Money's Tight

FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICE JUNE 2011



CHECK OUT:

- MyPlate at **www.ChooseMyPlate.gov** The website features practical information and tips to help Americans build healthier diets. MyPlate is designed to *remind* Americans to eat healthfully.
- *Loving Your Family Feeding Their Future* at **www.snap.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 600 low cost, nutritious and delicious recipes in both English and Spanish.
- The SNAP pre-screening tool at **www.snap-step1.usda.gov** to see if you may qualify for SNAP benefits and how much you might receive.
- The location of your nearest SNAP office at **www.fns.usda.gov/snap/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 is cheaper than sir-loin.
- 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.

Additional Resources

USDA Nutrition Assistance Programs Can Help Make Ends Meet

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

You may qualify for more than Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. If you get SNAP benefits 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.

SNAP- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program:

- *For:* Eligible low-income people and their families.
- *For More Information call* 1-800-221-5689.
- To find your nearest SNAP office visit: **www.fns.usda.gov/snap/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**

School Nutrition Program:

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

TEFAP- The Emergency Food Assistance Program:

- *For:* Eligible low-income persons.
- *For More Information visit:* **www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/tefap/tefap_eligibility.htm**

Resources for SNAP Partners and Educators

For more information, visit the SNAP-Ed Connection Web site.

The SNAP-Ed Connection is an online resource center which contains a wealth of information on healthy eating, using your food dollar wisely, and over 600 low cost recipes in English and Spanish. Visit SNAP-Ed Connection at:

http://snap.nal.usda.gov

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