

Published on *SeniorNavigator* (<https://seniornavigator.org>)

[Eat Right When Money's Tight](#)

Food costs are on the rise. Read on for tips on how to stretch your food dollars by planning ahead, budgeting, making smart food choices, and preparing low-cost recipes.

BEFORE Shopping

- **Plan your weekly meals and snacks.** Preparing in advance will help you know what you need and also help you put leftovers to good use. See below for more on planning ahead.
- **Use store circulars and go online to look for coupons, sales, and store specials.** Only use coupons on foods you normally eat. Make sure the coupons give you the best value for your money.
- **For added savings, sign up for the store discount card** or bonus card at your local supermarket.

DURING Shopping

- **Have something to eat before you go shopping.** It's easier to stick to your shopping list when you are not hungry.
- **Try store brands.** They are the same quality and cost less.
- **Compare products for the best deal.** Use unit pricing and also the Nutrition Facts labels to get the best product for your money. For more on food labels go to: www.fda.gov/food/food-labeling-nutrition
- **Check "sell by" or "use by" dates.** Buy the freshest food possible. For more on food product dating, go to: <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/safe-food-handling-and-preparation/food-safety-basics/food-product-dating>

AFTER Shopping

- **Store food right away** in the refrigerator or freezer to keep it fresh and safe.

- **If you buy a large amount** of fresh food, like meat, poultry, or fish, divide it into meal-size packages, label the food, and freeze it for later use.
- **Use foods** with the earliest expiration dates first.

Plan Ahead

1. Plan to prepare and eat foods you already have at home first.
2. Know how much money you have to spend on food.
3. Make a shopping list based on the money you have to spend and what foods you will need.
4. Buy only the amount of food you can use before it spoils. Remember, frozen, canned, or shelf-stable foods last longer.

More to Explore...

- *MyPlate Healthy Eating on a Budget:* www.choosemyplate.gov/eathealthy/budget
- *Basic Nutrition for Everyone:* www.nutrition.gov/topics/basic-nutrition

TIPS - Best Buys for Cost and Nutrition

Breads and Grains

Choose whole-grain breads. Look for bargains on day-old varieties. Buy regular brown rice and old-fashioned oats and grits instead of instant varieties to save money and consume less sugar, salt, and calories.

Vegetables

Buy large bags of frozen vegetables. When choosing canned vegetables, look for “low sodium” or “no added salt” on the label.

Fruits

Buy fresh fruit in season - it generally costs less. Frozen and canned fruits are available year-round, can save you money, and have similar nutrition values to fresh.

Low-Fat or Fat-Free Milk Products

Buy low-fat or fat-free milk, yogurt, and cheese in the largest size that can be used before spoiling. Larger containers cost less per serving than smaller sizes. Ultra-pasteurized milk found on store shelves has a longer expiration date and won't spoil as fast.

Meat and Beans

Dried beans and peas are a good source of protein and fiber. They can last a year or more without spoiling. Canned tuna packed in water is an inexpensive healthy protein choice. Light tuna has less mercury than white (albacore) tuna.

USDA Nutrition Assistance Programs Can Help Make Ends Meet

For more information on the following programs, contact:

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) For eligible low-income people and their families

Call: 1-800-221-5689

Visit: www.fns.usda.gov/snap/state-directory

Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) For eligible, low-income pregnant or breastfeeding women, new moms, and children under age 5

Visit: www.fns.usda.gov/wic/program-contacts

School Nutrition Programs For eligible low-income, school-aged children.

Contact your local school or school district

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) For eligible low-income people

Visit: www.fns.usda.gov/tefap/eligibility-and-how-apply

Did You Know?

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 have a low income and are pregnant, breastfeeding, a new mom, or have children under 5 years old, you might qualify for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) benefits. The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) is another Federal program that provides food to low-income people.

► [**Eat Right When Money's Right**](#) pdf

Article Source

U.S. Department of Agriculture

Source URL

<https://snaped.fns.usda.gov>

Last Reviewed

Thursday, March 27, 2025