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# Tips to Stretch Your Food Spending

By [The Nutrition Services Department](#)

This month, the federal government ended its Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) emergency allotments from the Families First Coronavirus Response Act in 2020. This means households that receive SNAP will no longer receive the extra boost to their food budget and will go back to their normal benefit amount. While households were receiving 2 deposits a month under the emergency allotment, they will now receive only 1 deposit a month, given at the beginning of each month. Meanwhile, grocery prices have gone up about 11% since last year and are expected to rise.

As the end of COVID-era food and nutrition benefits bring an ebb to SNAP benefits in 32 states as of March 1, food is medicine programs such services from God's Love are bringing resources to the table. Here are some tips and reminders for saving money on groceries for those who supplement meals from God's Love.

## 1. Frozen, canned, or fresh: All are healthy

- Frozen and canned fruits, vegetables, and beans are packed at peak ripeness, when the foods have the most nutrients.
- Frozen and canned items are convenient, and great for when fresh produce is out of season or just too expensive.
- For the healthiest option, check the ingredients for added sugar and salt.
- Sometimes salt in canned beans or veggies is hard to avoid, but you can rinse off the liquid using a colander.

## 2. Organic is optional

- You don't have to buy organic to eat healthy. In fact, many foods labeled organic aren't any healthier than those that aren't.
- To see whether a packaged food is healthy or not, the best place to look is the nutrition facts label.

## 3. Pay attention to price per unit

- Larger quantities and bulk items will often give you more for your money. If it's affordable to you and won't go to waste, bulk can be a better value for the long term.
- Sometimes bulk items are cheaper even in the short term. With small bottles and containers, you're paying a lot for packaging.

Instead of buying several small yogurts, you can buy one large container. Instead of buying several boxes of rice, you can buy one bag.



The 32-ounce yogurt on the right (B) is cheaper per unit (in this case, the unit is ounces) than the 6 oz yogurt on the left (A). But one of yogurt A will cost you less up front than one of yogurt B. If you only want one small yogurt, A is the way to go. In this example, B would save you money if you wanted 3 or more small yogurts.

- If an item is on sale, divide the sale price by the number of units (ounces, pounds, etc.) to determine if the sale is really a good deal.
- Portion out bulk items in smaller bags or containers for grab-and-go snacks and meals.
- Freeze whatever you won't use right away. Some foods that can be frozen are meat, dairy, berries, and vegetables that will be cooked. Click here for food storage tips.

## 4. Don't pay extra for big brands

- Buy generic and store brand items when possible, which are usually cheaper than name brand items.
- Name brands will usually be stocked at eye level, while less expensive choices will be on the bottom shelves.
- Generic brand items often have the same ingredients as name brand items, but are sometimes higher in sodium and fat. Always check the nutrition facts label to compare.

## 5. Go half and half with meat

- Some recipes that call for meat are versatile (think stews, soups, chili, burgers, and meatloaf). If meat is expensive, you can replace some or all of it with other healthy, but less expensive items.
- Swap ideas: Mushrooms, onions, beans, whole grains (whole wheat breadcrumbs, brown rice, millet, quinoa, barley, etc.), crumbled firm tofu.

## 6. Go veggie one or more nights per week

- People are eating more vegetarian meals for all kinds of reasons, including saving money.
- Beans and tofu are low-cost proteins that will leave you satisfied. They're also less processed and less expensive than many products that imitate meat.

## 7. Swap out an egg

- If eggs are too expensive, there are some recipes where you can substitute them. Some egg substitutes in baking are unsweetened applesauce, mashed banana, plain yogurt, aquafaba (chickpea canning liquid), ground flaxseed mixed with water, and seltzer or tonic water.
- For breakfast, try sautéing crumbled firm tofu (search recipes for "tofu scramble").

## 8. Keep your list close by

- Store your shopping list on your phone or in a permanent place in your bag or wallet so you don't overbuy at the store.

## 9. Don't shop hungry

- Shopping when you're hungry can lead to overbuying and clouded judgment.
- If you can't get a snack before you get to the store, pick up some popcorn or nuts. These healthy snacks can be paid for at the register when you're done.

## 10. Visit your local dollar store

- Dollar stores can be great places to buy less expensive non-food items, like cleaning supplies and personal care items.

## 11. Best by date $\neq$ expiration date

- "Best if used by/before" and "use by" dates are only recommendations for when to consume the food by, except in the case of infant formula.
- Infant formula is the only food that should never be bought or consumed after its "use by" date.
- For other foods, inspect the food itself to see if it is safe to eat.

## 12. DIY

- Make your own salad dressing using oil, vinegar or lemon juice, garlic or shallots, herbs, and spices. Look online for recipe ideas.
- Wash and cut up fruits and vegetables yourself, rather than buying them pre-prepared.

We hope you find these tips helpful!

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