

## How to Stretch Your Food Dollars During the Government Shutdown

### Make a plan.

Since February SNAP benefits are being issued now and must last for at least 1.5 months, it is imperative to ration and conserve as much as possible until the beginning of March.

- **Calculate how many dollars you can use each week until March** by dividing your total allotment of benefits by the number of weeks you must make those dollars last.
- **Make shopping lists** before going to the grocery with this budget in mind to help keep you on track. Keep grocery store ads and weekly sales in mind to stretch your dollar a little further.
- **Try to avoid any extra impulse purchases** at the store, especially at checkout.
- **Consider using a food pantry.** Many food pantries have an abundant amount of food right now due to agricultural tariffs. Food pantries can be found at <https://www.feedingamerica.org/find-your-local-foodbank>.
- If your children are not currently receiving *free or reduced school breakfasts and lunches*, you can apply at your school to take part in this assistance program. (Furloughed employees would be eligible to apply for these school meals due to their current income situation, rather than overall circumstances.)

**Consider buying more shelf-stable items** that can last longer. Shelf-stable does not mean unhealthy or lacking in nutrition. Canned fruits and vegetables packed in their own juices or water have the same nutrition as fresh produce. Frozen produce is a great option as well!

**Consider alternative protein sources.** Meat can be more expensive than plant protein. For instance, beans are a good source of protein and fiber, which will help to fill you up. Eggs are also a good source of protein and typically less expensive than meat. You can amp up your egg dishes with frozen vegetables for a filling and nutritionally balanced meal.

**Consider foods that are high in fiber** to help you stay full longer.

**Check local store ads** and apply for the free loyalty card offered at multiple chain grocery stores that can unlock further savings.

**Freeze meals or ingredients** that will not be able to be eaten within 3-4 days.

**Preparing foods at home** and cutting back on large helpings or second helpings can help your meals last longer by allowing for leftovers to consume another day.

If your SNAP benefits start to run low, **check with local faith-based organizations** that may offer a weekly free community meal. Keep an eye out for **local restaurants** offering free meals to folks with a government ID.

