

I am not a U.S. citizen. Can I get food stamps? Can my children?

You may get food stamps if you are a legal immigrant. Most legal immigrants must wait 5 years before getting food stamps. There is no wait for children under 18, some elderly and disabled, or for refugees and asylees. Some may get food stamps if they have enough work history. Some may be eligible if they have a military connection. Contact your local office to find out if you qualify as a legal immigrant.

If you yourself are not eligible due to immigration status, your legal immigrant or citizen children may still qualify. You do not have to provide immigration information about yourself when you apply for your legal immigrant or citizen children.

If I get food stamps, will I be a public charge?

No. You and your family can apply for and receive food stamps without hurting your chances of becoming U.S. citizens.

What happens if I have a sponsor?

There are special rules if you have a sponsor who signed legal papers of support after December 19, 1997. Your sponsor may have to pay back food stamp benefits given to you. Some of your sponsor's income and resources are counted as yours. This is called "deeming." It does not apply to children. There are other people it does not apply to. Contact your local food stamp office to find out more.

How can my family eat better?

You want the best for your family. You want everyone to stay well and for your kids to grow and learn. Using food stamp benefits to purchase healthy foods for your family can help make this happen. Ask your food stamp worker for information about eating and shopping for healthy food and getting physical activity for better health.

Try these tips to help your family eat better and stay healthy:

- Vary your vegetables...dark green, orange, peas and beans.
- Focus on fruits. Choose fresh, frozen, canned, or dried fruit.
- Eat at least 3 ounces of whole-grain cereal, breads, crackers, rice, or pasta every day.
- Choose lean meats and milk products that are lower in fat.
- Make physical activity a regular part of your day.



For more information on healthy eating visit:
www.mypyramid.gov.



Where can I get more information?

Call your local food stamp office.

Call the national food stamp information line:

1-800-221-5689

Visit: www.fns.usda.gov/fsp



Attach contact information label here

Food Stamps Make America Stronger.

1-800-221-5689

www.fns.usda.gov/fsp

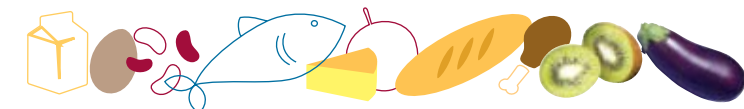
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What is the Food Stamp Program?

The Food Stamp Program helps people with little or no income buy nutritious food. Food stamp benefits are not cash. They come on an electronic EBT card that you use like a bank card to buy food. Most grocery stores take food stamp benefits.

Can I get food stamp benefits?

To get food stamp benefits, your income and other resources have to be under certain limits.

Income

Your total income, before taxes or any other subtractions, is called **gross income**. However, certain subtractions to your gross income, called deductions, are allowed. These can be for things like housing costs, child support payments, monthly medical expenses over \$35 for elderly or disabled people, or child-care costs. The amount left over after these deductions is called **net income**.

There are two income limits: gross income and net income. Most households must meet both income limits. If your household has a person who is 60 or older or who is disabled, you only need to meet the net income limit. If everyone in your household receives SSI or TANF, you do not need to meet any income limit. A separate insert with two tables on it has been included with this booklet. Look at the income table to find out what the limits are for food stamp benefits.

Resources

Your resources are things like bank accounts. Most households may have up to \$2,000 in resources and still qualify. If your household has a person who is 60 or older or disabled, you may have up to \$3,000 in resources.

The resources of people who receive TANF or SSI do not count. Your home does not count. In some States, at least one car does not count. Talk to your local food stamp office for more information.

To see if you might be able to get food stamps, visit www.foodstamps-step1.usda.gov. Answer the questions. You will find out if you might be eligible and how much you could receive. But to know for sure, you must apply.

How do I apply for food stamp benefits?

- Call or go to the local food stamp office for an application. Ask them to mail you the application. Or get the application online at www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/outreach/map.htm.
- Fill out the application as much as you can. Put your name and address on it and sign it.

- Return the application to the local office online, by mail or fax, or by taking it to the local office.
- Have an interview. You can also have a friend or relative go with you or in your place. Or you can do your interview over the phone.
- Show the local office papers like pay stubs, rent or mortgage payments, utility bills, child or elder care bills, and child support court orders. The local office can tell you exactly what papers and other information you will need to show your income and expenses.

After reviewing your application, the local office worker will tell you if you will get food stamps and how much.

How do I find my local office?

Call **1-800-221-5689** or visit www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/outreach/map.htm. Or look in the phone book in the government pages under “social services” or “human services” for the phone number.



Do I need a social security number?

Yes, you must get a social security number if you want food stamp benefits. Not all people in the household have to apply. People who do not want food stamp benefits do not have to give a social security number. But they do have to give their financial information.

Can I get food stamp benefits if I am not working?

Yes. But if you are able to work, you must look for work, take a job, or go to training.

If I am eligible, how much can I get?

Look at the inserted table to see the most you can get if you have no income. As your income goes up, your food stamp benefits go down.

If I am approved, what can I expect?

You will get an electronic EBT card to use to buy your groceries at the store.

If I am denied food stamps, can I ask why?

Yes. Call or visit the food stamp office to ask why. If you wish, you can ask to speak with the food stamp worker’s boss. If you think there is a mistake, ask for a “fair hearing.” This means that a State person will meet with you and the food stamp office to discuss your application. Fair hearings are free but you must ask for one within 90 days of being turned down.

