



Older Adults Benefit From Federal Nutrition Programs During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP): SNAP (the program name may vary by state) is available to eligible people of any age, and is a great help for older adults (age 60+) by providing them with money to purchase food. This money is loaded on to an electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card, which looks and is used like a debit card. During COVID-19, many states are providing additional, emergency SNAP benefits. If a person is already on SNAP, they do not have to do anything to get these additional benefits.

If a person is not on SNAP, they can apply for assistance. Generally, SNAP is available to older adults who have low-incomes. There are special rules that can make it easier for older adults to apply for SNAP. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has a list of where to get SNAP application information in each state (www.fns.usda.gov/snap/state-directory), as does the Eldercare Locator (eldercare.acl.gov) or call: 1-800-677-1116).

Home-Delivered Meals: Depending on where a person lives, they may be able to get meals delivered to their home. The meals might be hot, frozen, or shelf-stable. This program (also known as Meals on Wheels) is typically for older adults who are homebound and cannot cook or prepare meals. Because of the novel coronavirus, organizations are working to serve additional people, such as those who are quarantining. Organizations are also working to deliver the meals without contact between the delivery person and older adult to protect everyone's health. Who can get meals and how and when the meals are delivered varies by area. The Eldercare Locator and Meals on Wheels (www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/find-meals) have information on what areas have home-delivered meals programs.

Congregate meals: Many congregate meals sites (also called meals with friends or community dining) have temporarily closed to protect health during the COVID-19 public health crisis. Some organizations are working to deliver meals to older adults who usually eat lunch at community dining sites, like senior centers, but can no longer do so because of pandemic-related closures. The Eldercare Locator and Meals on Wheels have information on whether meals are available in your area.

Commodity Supplemental Food Program: Some food banks provide older adults with a box or bag of staple foods (canned fruits and vegetables, cheese, shelf-stable milk, cereals, potatoes, grains, peanut butter, and dried beans) each month through the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (the program name may vary by state). Participants must be low-income and age 60+.

Older adults should check with their local food bank to see if the program is offered in their area and if the program can accept new participants. Current participants may want to check with their food bank to see if there are changes to how and when the food box is being handed out during the coronavirus pandemic. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has information on participating states and contact information (<https://bit.ly/3fr3XJX>).

Emergency Food: Food providers, like food banks, food pantries, faith-based organizations, soup kitchens, and shelters, are distributing emergency food for all ages. There may be special programs for older adults depending on where you live. The Eldercare Locator and Feeding America (<https://www.feedingamerica.org/find-your-local-foodbank>) have information on whether there are locations in your area.