

# Feeding Your Family

## What's Happening

About one in five households with children in the United States face food insecurity at some point during the year. This means that the family sometimes cannot afford enough healthy food to feed everyone well. Some or all members of the family may go hungry, skip meals, or eat nothing for an entire day (or longer).

## What You Might Be Seeing

Healthy food is very important for children's growth and well-being. This is especially true during the first 3 years.

A lack of food affects children's:

- **Bodies.** Children may get sick and go to the hospital more often.
- **Behavior.** A lack of healthy food at home can cause fighting, hyperactivity, and mood swings in school-age children. Older youth may feel depressed, anxious, or suicidal.
- **Learning.** Children can have a hard time getting to school every day or making progress in reading and math.

## What You Can Do

The U.S. Department of Agriculture offers several programs to help families feed their children.

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly food stamps, helps low-income families pay for food. For more information, visit <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/apply>.
- The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) provides short-term help for low-income women, infants, and young



children. For more information, visit <http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/who-gets-wic-and-how-apply>.

- The National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs offer children free or reduced-price meals at many schools. Apply at your child's school or visit <http://www.fns.usda.gov/nslp/national-school-lunch-program-nslp>.
- The Summer Food Service Program provides free, healthy meals to children and teens in low-income areas during the summer. For more information, visit <https://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/summer-food-service-program>.

Most communities also offer food banks and other help for low-income families. In many areas, dialing 2-1-1 can connect you with local resources and support.

---

**Remember:** There are resources in every community to help families provide healthy food for their children.

---

\* This tip sheet was created using information from experts in national organizations that work to prevent child maltreatment and promote well-being. At <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/preventionmonth/resources/tip-sheets/>, you can download this tip sheet and get more parenting tips, or call 800.394.3366.