

food for thought

EATING WELL ON A BUDGET™



A SPECIAL GUIDE TO FAMILY MEALTIME

- talk about your child's feelings ✖
- find healthy foods that fit your budget ✖
- reach out to your community ✖



strong bodies, minds – and families

Healthy eating can give you the energy you need to juggle daily responsibilities with building solid family relationships. Sharing healthy meals has positive benefits for the whole family, too!

Sometimes wondering how to pay for food or find time to cook can be overwhelming. And if there isn't enough food all the time, it may be especially hard to make healthy choices. You are not alone; many people face difficulties in meeting their families' food needs. Even if options are limited, you can find places to get affordable, nutritious foods.

As a resource for you, *Sesame Street* has created **Food for Thought: Eating Well on a Budget**. Whether you're dealing with budget or time constraints, this magazine offers positive steps you can take to help your family stay healthy.

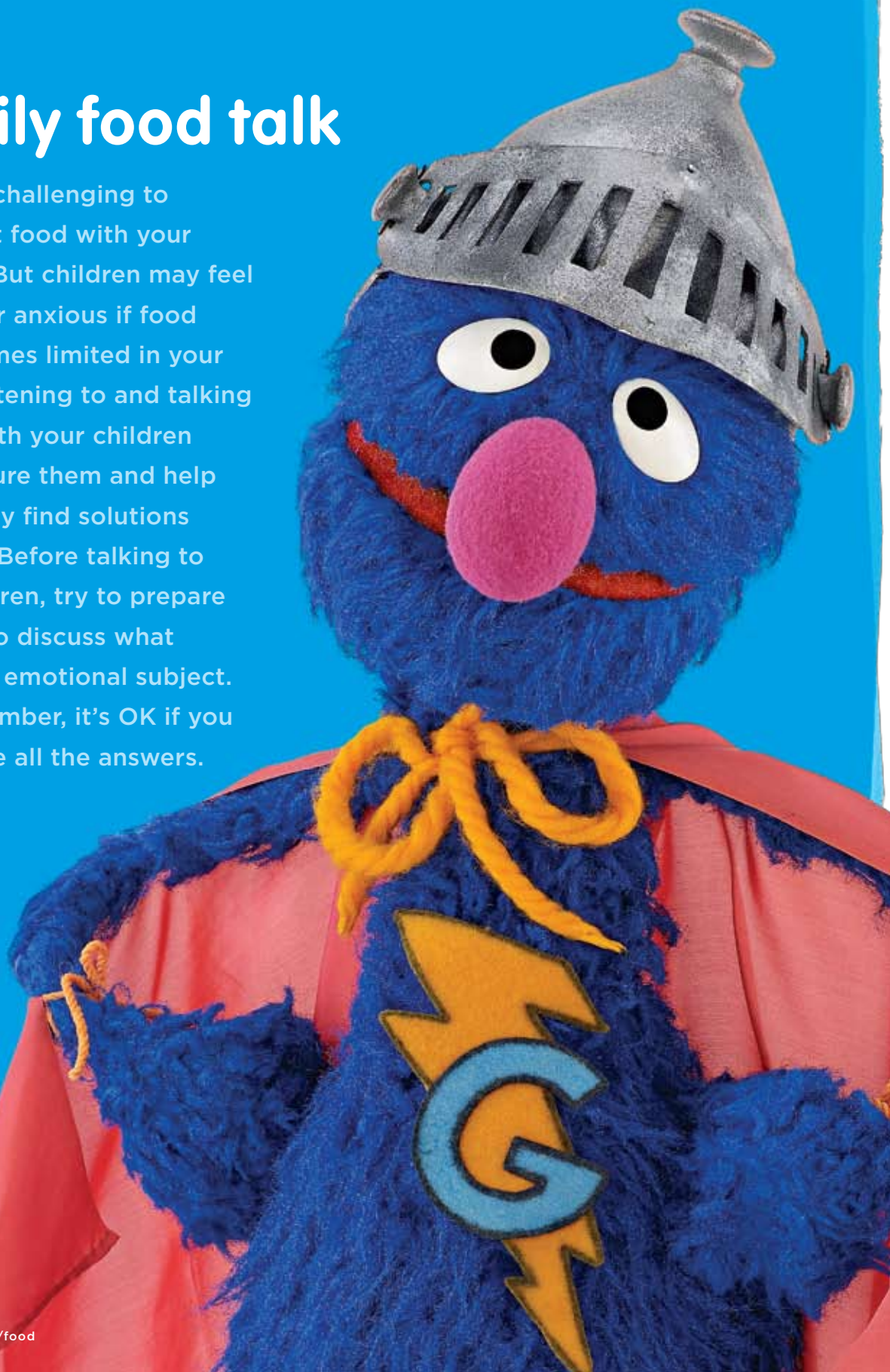
- * **Family Food Talk** offers ways for families to talk together about food and any related worries you and your children may have.
- * **Healthy Foods on a Budget** has ideas to help you plan, shop, and save money.
- * **Healthy Choices Anytime** offers tips for making healthy choices anytime, anywhere.
- * **Making Connections** includes ways to reach out for support.

PLUS... SESAME STREET RECIPE CARDS help your whole family feel good and have fun — for less!



family food talk

It can be challenging to talk about food with your children. But children may feel worried or anxious if food is sometimes limited in your home. Listening to and talking openly with your children can reassure them and help your family find solutions together. Before talking to your children, try to prepare yourself to discuss what can be an emotional subject. And remember, it's OK if you don't have all the answers.





FAMILY TIME Whether you're preparing food, sharing a meal, or shopping together, you can make food a part of happy family memories.

Children may have many questions, some of which might be hard for you to answer. That's all right.

As you begin to talk with children, here are some tips to keep in mind:

Talk about feelings.

Encourage children to use words to talk about their feelings. Children may have a wide variety of emotions. Are they worried, sad, angry, overwhelmed, or embarrassed? Let them know: "It's fine to feel this way." Comfort them by talking about specific things you are doing to help your family.

It's fine to say "no."

You may feel stressed if you're not able to buy things your children ask for. In these moments, try to remember that it's all right if children don't always get what they want. You're working to get them the things they need. Tell children, "I know you

want to buy those cookies now, but we have to save our money to buy healthy foods we *need*, to keep us strong." In fact, it's valuable to set limits for children.

Reassure older siblings.

You may notice big brothers or sisters making sacrifices without being asked. They may choose to skip meals or encourage their younger sibling to eat less food. Reassure them by saying: "Our whole family needs to eat and keep our bodies strong. You need to eat, too." Offer ideas for positive ways they can help the family. Older children can help make a shopping list, plan menus, and prepare meals.

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

Listening to children's questions and concerns lets them know that you're doing everything you can to take care of them. You know your children best, so share information you think they are ready to understand.

Will we have enough to eat? "We don't have a lot of money right now, but I love you and I'm doing everything I can to make sure we have food to eat."

Why don't we have enough food?
"It's just the way things are right now. But I'm getting help and I'm working hard to make sure we get the food we need."

Should I eat less so you can have some food? "No, it's important for you to eat and stay healthy. I'm finding ways to make our food last longer. If I need to, I will ask for more help."



together time

Talking about food with children can be fun. Ordinary moments can provide great chances to teach children about making healthy food choices — and to spend time together. Try some of these conversation starters:

In the kitchen

- ★ Can you help me find the ingredients we need for this recipe?
- ★ Let's make a rainbow salad with colorful vegetables!

At the dinner table

- ★ Sweet potatoes are my favorite food because they remind me of when...
- ★ Let's tell a story: Once upon a time, there was a little vegetable seed...

At the store

- ★ On our shopping list, there's a fruit that's red, shiny, crunchy, and round. Will you help me find it?
- ★ Let's look at the labels to check which cereal has less sugar.

TO BEST TAKE CARE of your children, try to keep your mind and body healthy, too, by doing things you enjoy. Take a break if you need it — ask a trusted adult if he or she can take care of your child for a short while. If you work on staying healthy, you help your whole family know that they can, too.

I want this candy. Can you buy it for me? “No, not right now. I know it’s something you want. But right now, we need to save money to buy things we really need — like fruits and vegetables to keep us healthy and strong.”

I don’t want to eat this. “Just try a little bite. If you don’t like it, that’s OK. We can try again another day.”



healthy foods on a budget

You can make healthy choices as a family, one small step at a time. Choose from the ideas in this section to find what works best for you.

a simple start

Even small changes in your routines can help you save money. And getting started doesn't take much time.

Make a shopping list. Keep a shopping list in a place that's easy to see so you can add to it any time. Checking your list as you shop can help you stick to your budget. Children can help write or draw items on the list, or check things off while shopping.

Look for generic or store brands. These usually cost less than name brands and taste just as good!

Start the day with a healthy breakfast. A healthy breakfast gives the whole family energy to stay focused all day. It can also be the most affordable meal of the day, whether you make it at home or participate in a public

school breakfast program. You can get creative with breakfast, too — try a healthy breakfast burrito with beans, salsa, low-fat cheese, and a whole-wheat tortilla.





ANOTHER WAY TO SAVE
Buying foods that everyone in the family likes will help make sure that less goes to waste.

Whether you are shopping at a large supermarket, a farmers' market, or a local grocery store, simple steps can help you save money.

thinking ahead



Spend just a few minutes planning ahead and you can save a lot of time and money in the long run!

Buy fruits and vegetables that are in season. Although most fruits and vegetables are available throughout the year, keep in mind that some cost less when they are in season. Farmers' markets offer seasonal produce, and many accept SNAP cards or WIC vouchers. To find out what's in season, search for "seasonal produce" online, or ask someone working at your local market.

Buy in bulk. You may save money by buying in bulk (if you will use large quantities) or stocking up on sale items.

Be in the know. Find out when stores publish weekly flyers or announce sale items. Ask a store manager or clerk about current or upcoming sales.

Planning ahead gets easier over time. The whole family can help make choices that fit into your routines.



MAKE LEFTOVERS INTO SOUP You can save bits of vegetables, rice, meats, beans, or tomato sauce in a container in the freezer. When the container is full, add water, herbs, and other seasonings or low-sodium canned broth to make a delicious soup, stew, or chili.

in the long term

There are even more steps your family can take to make healthy choices on a budget over time.



Create a weekly menu.

As you get used to planning ahead, preparing weekly menus can help you save money and make food last longer. Look at the *Sesame Street* Recipe Cards in this kit, and check online at [sesamestreet.org/food](https://www.sesamestreet.org/food), for meal and snack ideas.

Plant a garden. Growing your own food can be a great way to have fun as a family and save money. Plant things like tomatoes, peppers, and herbs outdoors or in pots at home, or look for community gardens in your area. Gardening helps children learn where food comes from.

They'll also be excited to try the healthy foods that they helped grow!

Stay healthy on weekends and during the summer.

You may find summer breakfast programs, weekend services, or community meals in your neighborhood. You may also find free summer activity programs or events, such as playground playtime, where your child can get healthy snacks, too.

SAVE FOR LATER!

Leftovers can be made into delicious and healthy meals. At home, save time and money by making more servings than you need, then saving the rest.

Refrigerate or freeze leftovers quickly. If you plan to eat leftovers within a day or so, refrigerate them. If you plan to eat them later than that, freeze leftovers in reusable containers.

Thaw foods safely. Leaving foods to thaw on the counter can make them unsafe to eat. Thaw foods safely in the refrigerator, in cold water, or in the microwave.

Divide portion sizes. Separate leftovers into single serving sizes for easy preparation.

Mark and date. To keep track of when you put the foods in the freezer or refrigerator, mark the containers with the date and what's inside.

stretch your dollar

These tips can help you make healthy, hearty meals that fit your budget.

Choose low-cost sources of protein. Dried beans, peas, and lentils; canned fish; eggs; and peanut butter are healthy, inexpensive sources of protein.

Buy frozen or canned fruits and vegetables.

In addition to fresh produce, try to pick canned food that is labeled “in its own juice,” “no added sugar,” or “low sodium.” If these aren’t available, drain and rinse other types before eating.

Swap foods and coupons with friends. You may have many cans or boxes of one kind of food, or extra coupons. Ask friends if they have different extra items or coupons to exchange. Swapping can help you add variety to your meals — and save money, too!

Try powdered milk. Its long shelf life makes it an easy, affordable option. You can use it instead of regular milk in just about any recipe, from creamed vegetable soups to rich fruit smoothies.



healthy choices anytime

Eating well helps you feel your best. Whether you're at home or on the go, you can use these simple tips to help your whole family stay healthy.



make at home

- * Try to bake, broil, steam, or microwave instead of frying.
- * Make your own salad dressings with vegetable oil and vinegar instead of using high-fat creamy dressings (three parts oil to one part vinegar).
- * Make quesadillas with whole-wheat tortillas, sliced veggies, and reduced-fat cheese.
- * Choose herbs, spices, and other low-fat seasonings to add flavor instead of salt.
- * Try whole-grain crackers with reduced-fat cheese slices or peanut butter.



on the go

- * When ordering food, try packaged apple slices or a salad with low-fat dressing on the side instead of fries.
- * On the go, order a regular hamburger with no mayo. Try adding flavor with mustard instead.
- * If you want a sweet treat, try a low-fat yogurt parfait.



anytime

- * Choose low-fat or fat-free milk, cheese, and yogurt. They provide as much protein and calcium as whole-milk products do.
- * Try "grilled" choices instead of "fried" (such as a salad with grilled chicken strips).
- * Snack on fruits and vegetables such as sliced apples and oranges, carrot sticks, celery, and cucumber sticks. Take them to go in plastic bags or reusable containers.
- * Make a healthy sandwich with whole-grain bread, lean meat, and reduced-fat cheese. Wrap it up for lunch on the go.
- * Try low-fat yogurt or hummus instead of mayo in sandwiches.
- * Eat a rainbow! Try to add as many colorful fruits and vegetables as you can to your meals and snacks.
- * Choose whole grains (whole-wheat tortillas, pastas, and rice). To get used to brown rice, mix half white rice and half brown (cook each kind of rice separately, then combine).
- * If you are thirsty, try drinking water instead of soda. You'll decrease the sugar you take in each day and feel more energetic.

SPECIAL TIMES TOGETHER CAN START EARLY Breastfeeding provides many nutritional and emotional health benefits to mother and baby. These special moments can create a foundation for a lifelong bond between mother and child.



food is best when shared with those you love!

You can talk and laugh together over any meal. Below are five ways to enjoy food with your family:

- * Make breakfast for dinner. Try scrambled eggs or whole-wheat pancakes.
- * Take your lunch to the park.
- * Have a rainy-day picnic at home.
- * Choose a meal theme, such as a Mexican fiesta. Children can make paper place mats or other decorations.
- * Play “Follow the Eater”: Have each family member take turns deciding what food to taste a bit of. The other family members then follow along.

You might not always have the whole family together at once, but shared mealtimes can bring your family closer. Your together time can help encourage your children to make healthy choices now and as they grow.



TEAM UP Involve the whole family at mealtimes! Children can help set the table or even share a story about the day. Working together as a family can help children feel good about food.

FOR GRANDPARENTS While caring for children, it's important to make sure you get the nutrients you need, too. There may be senior services in your area that bring meals right to your home. Contact your local community or senior center or faith-based organization to see if you can benefit from one of these programs.



making connections

It may be hard to ask for help, but there are services that can assist your family. These include free food, nutrition information, and referrals to social service agencies. The resources on this page can help you find support.

- ✱ **The National WIC Association (NWA)** is 9 million WIC clients and 12,200 state and local service provider agencies offering nutritious foods, nutrition and breastfeeding education, and health and social service referrals to WIC mothers and young children. Visit www.nwica.org.
- ✱ **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)** is the federal government's food stamp program. Visit www.fns.usda.gov/snap.
- ✱ **Feeding America** is the nation's largest domestic hunger-relief organization, with a network of food banks whose focus is to provide food assistance to those who need it. Visit www.feedingamerica.org.
- ✱ **The Meals On Wheels Association of America's** member programs feed those who are 60 years of age and older and those in need. MOWAA's vision is to end senior hunger by 2020. Visit www.mowaa.org.
- ✱ In the **National School Lunch Program**, children in grades K-12 can get free or lower-price lunches at school. Some schools also serve breakfast, after-school snacks, fresh fruits and vegetables, and summer meals. Ask someone at your child's school office to apply, or visit www.fns.usda.gov/cnd.



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Senior Vice President, Outreach and Educational Practices:
Jeanette Betancourt, Ed.D.

Editor in Chief: **Rebecca Herman**
Project Editor/Coordinator: **Beth Sharkey**
Writers: **Leslie Kimmelman** (story),
Tonya Leslie (provider guide), **Jane Park** (parent/caregiver guide)
Editorial Contributors: **Helena Jane Carey, Rebecca Webster**
Line/Copy Editors: **Melanie Gold, Jeanette Leardi**
Proofreader: **Diane Feldman**
Photo Researcher: **Kaitlyn Jeffers**
Editorial Interns: **Tara Dougherty, Nicole Hoff**

Vice President, Marketing and Brand Strategy:
Suzanne Duncan

Vice President, Creative Services: **Theresa Fitzgerald**
Director, Marketing and Creative Services: **Giao Roever**
Designer: **Kristin Richards Lauricella/Lauricella Design**
Spanish Typesetting: **Karla Henrick**

Director, Outreach and Content Design:
María del Rocío Galarza
Interim Director, Outreach and Content Design: **Krystynn Krywko**
Project Director: **Cynthia Barron**
Assistant Project Director: **Chelsea Most**
Senior Curriculum Specialists: **Pooja Makhijani, Amelia Swabb**
Director, Domestic Research: **David Cohen**
Assistant Project Manager: **Chrissy App**
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Spanish Language Editor: **Helen Cuesta**
Bilingual Consultant: **Enery López**
Spanish Translation: **Paula Rochna, Intertanto Translations, LLC**
Spanish Proofreading: **Ninoska Marcano**

SPECIAL THANKS The entire **Food for Thought** team

CORPORATE PARTNERSHIPS

Senior Vice President: **Anita Stewart**
Assistant Vice President: **Stephanie Patrucco**
Director: **Mai Nguyen**
Assistant Manager: **Jennifer Shin**

SESAME WORKSHOP

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ADVISORS

Enid Borden, Meals On Wheels Association of America
Mariana Chilton, Ph.D., M.P.H., Witness to Hunger
Vicky Escarra, Feeding America
Edward Frongillo, Jr., Ph.D., University of South Carolina
Reverend Douglas Greenaway, National WIC Association
Ronald Kleinman, M.D., Massachusetts General Hospital
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