

HOW TO USE YOUR FOOD STAMPS

The Food Stamp Program helps low-income people buy the food they need for good health. The amount of food stamp benefits depends on your income, the number of persons in your household and where in Alaska you live. Amounts are based on the U.S. Department of Agriculture Thrifty Food Plan, which is an estimate of what it costs to provide nutritious, inexpensive meals. You can use food stamp benefits in most grocery stores.

Here are some basic rules when using food stamp benefits to buy groceries:

- Always bring your Alaska Quest card when you go shopping. You cannot purchase groceries with food stamp benefits without having the card with you.
- Your food stamp benefits can only purchase food items.
- You will not receive change back. The total value of the purchase, including cents, will be deducted from your food stamp account on your Alaska Quest card.
- Food stamp benefits may not be used to pay for credit or charge accounts. The food stamp benefits can be used only at the time of a food purchase.
- You cannot be charged sales tax on food stamp purchases.

HELPFUL HINTS

As you put groceries in your cart, keep the food items that can be purchased with food stamps separate from items that you must purchase with cash. By doing this, you may be able to get through the checkout counter faster.

Buying food products in larger quantities may help stretch your food stamp dollar.

You may use manufacturer's "cent off" discount coupons, if your grocer accepts them.

SPECIAL SUBSISTENCE HUNTING AND FISHING RULES

In certain remote areas of Alaska subsistence hunting and fishing items may be purchased with food stamp benefits. Eligible households are given a specially marked identification card.

Even though some subsistence hunting and fishing items may be expensive, they cannot be purchased on credit and paid for later with food stamp benefits. Nor can they be paid for before the item is delivered.

- Items that can be purchased with food stamps include hunting and fishing equipment such as nets, hooks, fishing line, rods, harpoons, knives, and other necessary equipment.
- Items that cannot be purchased with food stamps include equipment used for transportation (including gasoline and motor oil), clothing or shelter, firearms, ammunition, and explosives.

Food stamp benefits can be used to buy most food items. Some groceries cannot be paid for with food stamp benefits. Here is a list of food items that CAN BE purchased and a list of items that CANNOT BE purchased with food stamp benefits.

FOOD ITEMS THAT CAN BE PURCHASED WITH FOOD STAMP BENEFITS

- All food or food products meant to be eaten by people.
- Vegetable seeds and food producing plants, roots, and trees. Also, seeds and plants to produce spices and herbs used in cooking foods.
- Items considered “health foods” like wheat germ, brewers yeast, and seeds packaged to be eaten by people.
- Baby formula, diabetic and diet foods.
- Items used in preparing or preserving foods such as spices and herbs, pectin, and shortening.
- Snack foods like candy, potato chips, chewing gum, and soft drinks.
- Meals prepared for and delivered or served to elderly or disabled food stamp recipients if the public or private organization is authorized to accept food stamps.
- Distilled water and ice, if labeled “For Human Consumption”.

ITEMS THAT CANNOT BE PURCHASED WITH FOOD STAMP BENEFITS

- Alcoholic beverages and tobacco.
- Nonfood items such as soap, toiletries, cleaning products, paper products, cooking utensils.
- Items not meant to be eaten by people such as laundry starch, pet foods, seeds packaged as birdseed, and decorative dye; items for food preservations such as pressure cookers, canning jars and lids, paraffin freezer containers and wrapping paper.
- Therapeutic products such as vitamins and minerals in any form.
- All health aids such as aspirin, cough drops or syrups, and other cold remedies, antacids, and all patent medicines.
- Items used for gardening such as fertilizer and peat moss.
- Prepared hot foods and hot food products sold in grocery stores, that are hot at the time of sale and ready to be eaten immediately.
- Any prepared food (hot or cold) sold and meant to be eaten at the store.