

Nutrition in the Commodity Supplemental Food Program Food Package

The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) offers a supplemental food package to low-income, older adults. The monthly food package contains a variety of foods with important nutrients for older adults including protein; calcium; iron; vitamins A, C, and D; and fiber. USDA Foods in CSFP align with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and contain reduced amounts of sodium, saturated fat, and added sugar.

Shelf-Stable Foods Contribute to a Nutritious Meal Plan

A common misconception is that shelf-stable foods (packaged and canned) are not healthy. Canned fruits and vegetables can be just as nutritious as their fresh or frozen forms. In fact:

- Fruits and vegetables are usually canned within hours after harvest, harnessing their peak freshness and ensuring the best nutrient quality;¹
- Canning preserves many nutrients. For example, canned tomatoes have more lycopene (an antioxidant) and B vitamins than fresh tomatoes;²
- Canning helps make fiber in certain vegetables, like beans, more soluble and more useful to the body.²

Including CSFP Foods in Healthy Meals and Snacks

- Add canned beans or vegetables to soup or chili.
- Pump up the protein in a salad by adding canned tuna, chicken, or beans.
- Top dry or hot cereal with raisins or canned fruit.
- Add canned/pouched beef to tomato sauce and serve over pasta or rice.
- Blend milk, peanut butter, canned fruit, and a few ice cubes for a quick smoothie.

Meeting Special Dietary Needs With Shelf-Stable Foods

CSFP was designed to help meet the dietary needs of healthy older adults, however, the variety of foods offered are appropriate for several common diet-related health conditions among older adults. For example:

- Canned vegetables that are low sodium or no salt added can help older adults limit sodium intake to the recommended amount of less than 2,300 mg per day and support a healthy heart and blood pressure.³
- Canned beans, vegetables, and whole grains contain fiber and low or no saturated fat. Canned fruits contain low or no added sugar. These CSFP foods can be incorporated into dietary patterns that can benefit people with diabetes, pre-diabetes, or certain heart conditions.
- Dairy foods such as low and non-fat shelf-stable milk and reduced-fat cheese add calcium to the diet to support bone health.



¹ Ellis, E. (2020). "Are Canned Foods Nutritious for My Family?" Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. <https://www.eatright.org/food/vitamins-and-supplements/nutrient-rich-foods/are-canned-foods-nutritious-for-my-family>. Last Updated: April 8, 2020. Accessed: November 3, 2021.

² Miller, S.R., & Knudson, W.A. (2014). Nutrition and Cost Comparisons of Select Canned, Frozen, and Fresh Fruits and Vegetables. American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine, 8(6), 430–437. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1559827614522942>.

³U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. [Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025](https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/). 9th Edition. December 2020. Available at [DietaryGuidelines.gov](https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/).

