

Eat Right

Food, Nutrition and Health Tips from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

Eating Right on a Budget

Getting the most nutrition for your food budget starts with a little extra planning before you shop. There are many ways to save money on the foods that you eat. Here are some budget-friendly tips for eating right.

Plan what you're going to eat

Before you head for the grocery store, plan your meals and snacks for the week. Review recipes for what ingredients are needed. Check to see what foods you already have and make a list of what you need to buy. When you shop with a list, you will be less likely to buy extra items that are not on it.

Decide how much to make

Making a large batch by doubling a recipe will save time in the kitchen later on. Extra portions can be used for lunches or meals later in the week, or freeze leftovers in individual containers for future use. Plus, foods purchased in bulk are almost always cheaper.

Determine where to shop

Check the local newspaper, online and at the store for sales and coupons, especially when it comes to more expensive ingredients, such as meat and seafood. While at the store, compare prices of different brands and different sizes of the same brand to see which has a lower unit price. The unit price is usually located on the shelf directly below the product.

Shop for foods that are in season

Fresh fruits and vegetables that are in season are usually easier to get and may be a lot less expensive. Your local farmer's market is also a great source of seasonal produce. Just remember that some fresh fruits and vegetables don't last long. Buy small amounts at a time to avoid having to throw away spoiled produce.



Try canned or frozen produce

At certain times of the year, frozen and canned fruits and vegetables may be less expensive than fresh. For canned items, choose fruit canned in 100% fruit juice and vegetables with “low sodium” or “no salt added” on the label.

Focus on nutritious, low-cost foods

Certain foods tend to be less expensive, so you can make the most of your food dollars by finding recipes that use the following ingredients: beans, peas, and lentils; sweet or white potatoes; eggs; peanut butter; canned salmon, tuna or crabmeat; grains such as oats, brown rice, barley or quinoa; and frozen or canned fruits and vegetables.

Watch portion sizes

Eating too much of even lower cost foods and beverages can add up to extra dollars and calories. Use smaller plates, bowls and glasses to help keep portions under control. Fill half your plate with fruits and vegetables and the other half with whole grains and lean meat, poultry, seafood or beans. This is an easy way to eat a balanced meal while controlling portions and cost. To complete the meal, add a glass of fat-free or low-fat milk or a serving of fat-free yogurt for dessert.

Make your own healthy snacks

Convenience costs money, so many snacks, even healthy ones, usually cost more when

sold individually. Make your own snacks by purchasing large tubs of low-fat yogurt or cottage cheese and dividing them into one-cup containers. For trail mix, combine nuts, dried fruit and whole grain pretzels or cereal; store small portions in airtight containers. Air-popped popcorn and whole fresh fruits in season also tend to cost less compared to pre-packaged items.

Cook more, eat out less

Many foods prepared at home are cheaper and more nutritious. Also, convenience foods like frozen dinners, pre-cut vegetables and instant rice or oatmeal will cost you more than if you make them from scratch. Go back to basics and find a few simple and healthy recipes that your family enjoys.

For a referral to a registered dietitian nutritionist and for additional food and nutrition information visit www.eatright.org.



The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics is the largest organization of food and nutrition professionals. The Academy is committed to improving the public's health and advancing the profession of dietetics through research, education and advocacy.

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