

**March is National
Nutrition
Month**

Eating
"healthy"
is too
expensive!

**Is this a
comment
you've heard
before?**

Maybe you've even thought it yourself.

After a year filled with challenging economic events and rising food prices, most of us have felt a strain on our budget.

Thankfully, however, you don't have to skimp on nutritious foods to save your cash. There are many ways to offer your family healthy meals and snacks while staying within a budget.

In honor of National Nutrition Month, we have provided a list of tips that will help you cut costs and still consume a healthy diet.

Healthy
eating
without
overspending

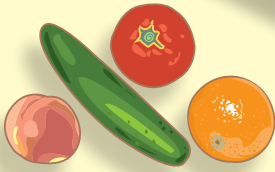
NIH Division of Nutrition
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Good Buys For Good Nutrition

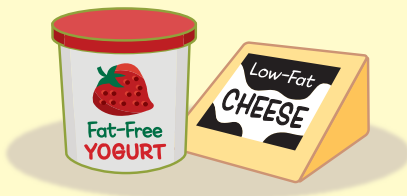


Fruits and Vegetables

- ▶ **Buy fresh fruits and vegetables that are in season;** they usually cost less. Frozen vegetables (without sauces) and canned vegetables (no salt added) and canned fruits (in 100% juice) are also healthy and low-cost options. If you can't find canned vegetables without added salt, drain and rinse canned vegetables before using.
- ▶ **Examples of fresh fruits and vegetables that are often among the cheapest include:** bananas, apples, oranges, cabbage, sweet potatoes, dark green leafy vegetables, green peppers, and regular carrots (which are much cheaper than "baby" carrots).
- ▶ **Store fruits (including tomatoes and avocados) separately from vegetables** to prolong their shelf life. As some fruits ripen they can give off ethylene gas, which makes vegetables like lettuce wilt faster.

Milk, Yogurt, and Cheese

- ▶ Buy fat-free or low-fat milk, cheese, and yogurt **in the largest size you know your family will consume.**
- ▶ Prepared products with extra processing like grated cheese, individually wrapped string cheese, or yogurt smoothies usually cost more than a block of cheese or a container of yogurt. **Look for products with minimal processing.**



Whole Grains

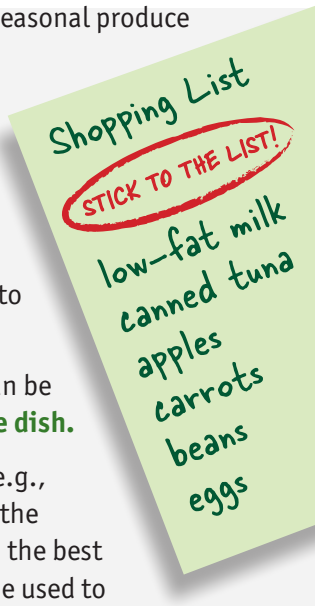
- ▶ Instead of instant or flavored rice or oatmeal, **buy the regular or plain versions,** which are usually less expensive. Plain varieties are also typically lower in sodium and added sugars. Check to see if these products are available in bulk. They have a long shelf life and are good staples. Brown rice, barley, or other whole grains can be added to stews, soups, and casseroles.
- ▶ **Look for deals** on whole-grain, day-old breads in the bakery department.

Meat, Poultry, Fish, Dry Beans, Eggs, and Nuts

- ▶ **Search for specials** on lean cuts at the meat counter.
- ▶ Sometimes meats packaged in bulk offer better values. **Be sure to freeze the portions you don't plan to use right away.**
- ▶ **Canned fish** (e.g., salmon and tuna) and foil packs of fish offer a less expensive alternative to meat while providing just as much protein. **Select fish packed in water, not oil.**
- ▶ **Plan a meat-free meal.** Plant sources of protein, such as dried beans, lentils or peas are good sources of fiber and are cheaper than meat. **Beans** can easily be added to salads, pasta, or rice. **Eggs** are also an inexpensive source of high-quality protein.
- ▶ **Purchase nuts or seeds in bulk** and make your own trail mix at home or spread peanut butter on whole-grain toast for a healthy and affordable snack. Because nuts are high in calories, it may be helpful to limit your intake to 1-2 oz per day.

Shopping Tips

- ▶ **Before going to the grocery store**, check what foods you already have at home and determine what meals you can make from these ingredients.
- ▶ **Check grocery store flyers/ads/websites** when planning your shopping trip to learn what is on sale, what promotions are offered, and what seasonal produce is available.
- ▶ **Make a list of all the foods you plan to buy before going to the store.** Following a list reduces impulse buying, which can add to your grocery bill.
- ▶ Buy ingredients that can be used for **more than one dish**.
- ▶ **Compare unit prices** (e.g., price/ounce) listed on the store's shelf tag to find the best buys. Unit prices can be used to compare different brands of the same food or different sizes of the same brand. Look for store brands, which are often cheapest.
- ▶ **Stock up on non-perishables** when they go on sale.
- ▶ **Don't be fooled by large displays**—more marketing does not mean lower prices.
- ▶ **Check the "best before dates"** on packages, and select the products with dates farthest away. This will help ensure that you are purchasing the freshest products.



Cooking Tips

- ▶ Making dinner for the family on a busy night can be tricky, which is why it is helpful to **prepare meals in advance** on days that aren't so hectic. Involve the whole family to cook your favorite recipes. Then, freeze individual portions in microwave-safe containers for a quick lunch or dinner on another day. Preparing your own microwave meals saves money and is a fun family activity that teaches everyone valuable kitchen skills.
- ▶ **Plan to turn leftovers into another meal.** For example, if you bake chicken on Wednesday, use leftovers in a casserole or in sandwiches on Thursday. Leftovers can also be frozen for later use.



- ▶ **Find recipes for simple meals with 5-10 or fewer ingredients.** Visit <http://recipefinder.nal.usda.gov/> for examples.

Dining Out

- ▶ While dining out can be expensive, it is often convenient. According to the National Restaurant Association, American adults buy a meal or snack from a restaurant 5.8 times per week on average. **To reduce costs, start by eating out one time less than usual each week.**
- ▶ Many restaurants provide portions that are large enough to make two meals out of one entrée. **Bring half of your meal home for the next day, or if dining with a friend or family member, order an entrée to share.** This is not only economical, but it is also a way to control portion sizes.
- ▶ If you often meet a friend or colleague for lunch at a restaurant, **try bringing your lunch and meeting outside in a park** when the weather permits.



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