

Healthy Eating on a Shoestring

Healthy eating doesn't need to be expensive. In fact, spending money for convenience, like fast food or takeout, can add up and cost more than healthier choices that are prepared at home.

The good news is that you can eat well even on a small budget, without sacrificing taste or nutrition. With a bit of planning, taking advantage of sales, and preparing more food at home, you too can enjoy tasty and healthy foods.

Planning Your Shopping

Have a Plan.

🍎 Plan healthy meals and snacks for the coming week based on your budget. Develop a grocery list based on your meal plan, and stick to it. Buy only what you truly need.

🍎 Shop around the edges of the store first. This is where you can usually find the basics: vegetables and fruit, milk products, grain products and meats.

🍎 Shop Infrequently. The more times you visit the grocery store, the more you are likely to spend. Keep expenses down by limiting trips to the grocery store to once a week.

🍎 Buy Bulk When It Makes Sense. Foods like oats, rice, dry pasta, legumes, and dried fruits can be kept for a long time and are often cheaper when they are sold in bulk. But not all bulk or large-size foods offer huge savings. For example, if extra-large cans of vegetables or fish typically contain more than your family can eat, you may end up wasting unused portions.

Taking Advantage of Sale Prices

🍎 Shop the Sales and Compare Prices. Many grocery stores offer special discount days that can significantly reduce your grocery bill. Read flyers that highlight sale items, and compare prices between stores before you leave the house. Compare prices between name brands and store brands. You will get the same quality for a lower price.

🍎 Buy Produce in Season. Produce prices vary by season. Save money by looking for vegetables and fruits that are locally grown and in season. Avoid imported or out-of-season items.



🍎 **Ask Questions.** Grocery stores may sell slightly bruised fruit and vegetables or day-old baking at reduced prices. Others offer discount pricing on end-cuts of deli meat rolls or meats approaching their "best before" dates. These kinds of sales are rarely promoted, so take a minute to ask the store staff if deals like this are available.

Preparing Food at Home

🍎 **Do It Yourself.** Convenience foods such as frozen dinners, pre-cut vegetables and fruit, and snack foods can be expensive because most of the preparation has been done for you. Cut costs by preparing and cooking ingredients at home.



🍎 **Snack foods** are some of the most expensive foods in the store. Replace some of your snack foods with whole grain breads. This will help increase your fiber intake, and it will also cut food costs and fat in your diet. Instead of potato chips, turn leftover whole wheat pitas into pita chips by brushing them with oil then sprinkling them with a seasoning, cutting them into wedges and baking them in the oven at 350°F for 10 minutes. You can also snack on stovetop or air-popped popcorn.

🍎 **Manage Your Meat Budget.** Buy smaller amounts of meat, and use them in dishes such as casseroles that contain other, less expensive ingredients. Keep meat portions smaller (about the size of a deck of cards) to save money. Buy cheaper cuts of meat, and then tenderize them by slowly cooking them in water or broth.

🍎 Peanut butter, tofu, lentils, split peas, kidney beans and other dried beans are good sources of protein that are usually less expensive than meat. For some ideas on how to use these foods, check a recipe book or ask your dietitian.

🍎 You've probably seen words such as "Canada Choice" or "Canada Grade A" on some foods. All food grades are equally nutritious. Often the less expensive grades will suit your needs.

🍎 You can eat well, even if your budget for food is tight. Keep food costs down by planning your purchases, taking advantage of sale prices, and preparing delicious, home-cooked meals from scratch. Remember to save leftovers for lunches and suppers.