



Quick Tips: Healthy Eating on a Budget

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Get started

There are ways to make healthy eating fit your budget. You'll be surprised by how spending just a little extra time can save you money. And the more time you spend—in planning, shopping, and cooking—the more money you'll save.

Save money by learning and planning:

- Plan and shop for a week's worth of meals at a time. You're less likely to go out to eat or buy expensive convenience foods during the week when the ingredients for dinner are already in your kitchen.
- Keep a list of what leftovers are in your refrigerator and freezer. That way they won't go to waste because you forgot they were there. And you can use the list when you're planning next week's meals.
- Watch grocery store ads for sales so that you can stock up on items you know you will use. You can sometimes save money by buying more of something. For example, some stores may give you a discount if you buy 12 cans of chicken broth instead of just 2 or 3.
- Learn how much food costs. That way you can tell when an advertised sale is really a good deal.
- Use coupons. People who invest time in saving and organizing coupons often save a lot of money.
- Learn how to grow your own vegetables. If you don't have the space, see if there is a community garden in your neighborhood. Or try growing a few vegetables or herbs on your porch or in a sunny indoor room.
- See how many convenience foods you can cross off your list by planning something healthier and cheaper instead. For example:
 - Instead of potato chips, buy unpopped popcorn you can make at home.
 - Instead of ready-made desserts, make your own cookies, cakes, or muffins.
 - Instead of packaged snacks, buy crackers and peanut butter to make your own little sandwich snacks. Or snack on fresh or dried fruits.
 - Instead of sweetened cold cereals, buy oatmeal or other hot cereal.

Save money at the grocery store:

- Always shop with a list. Try not to buy anything that's not on your list, but be open to unexpected sale items that you know you will use.
- Shopping with family members can cost you money if they talk you into buying things that aren't on your list. Shop by yourself if you have to.
- Buy fresh fruits and vegetables when they're in season. They are likely to be fresher and cost less.
- Buy frozen vegetables. They are picked at the peak of ripeness and have just as many—or more—vitamins and minerals as fresh. And they cost less.
- Buy store brands instead of name brands.
- Shop in the bulk foods aisle, where things like beans, rice, pasta, and other dried foods may be cheaper.

Save money elsewhere:

- Whole-grain bread is healthier than regular bread, but it usually costs more. If you have a bakery outlet in your community, you can buy day-old whole-grain bread there at a discount.
- Check out fresh produce at a farmer's market or a produce stand. Prices are sometimes lower there than at the grocery store.
- Many fruit orchards let customers pick the fruit themselves to save money.

Save money in your kitchen:

- Build up your cooking skills. Buy one good, general cookbook. Used bookstores are a good source.
- Invest in a slow cooker or Crock-Pot. With a slow cooker you can buy less expensive cuts of meat, because the long, slow cooking time makes them tender and very tasty. Plus, the dish cooks all day while you're at work or busy with something else.
- Learn how to cut up a chicken. You can save money by buying whole chickens and cutting them apart yourself. And make soup with the bones.
- Make vegetables your main dish, and serve your meat as a smaller side dish. You'll save money by eating less meat. You can also serve beans instead of meat.
- Make your own lunch, and take it with you to work.
- Use recipes you can double or triple, so you can freeze leftovers for later.
- When a recipe calls for milk, use dried fat-free milk. It's cheaper and doesn't need to be kept cold. You just add the milk powder to water to make only as much as you need.

Credits

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Author: Healthwise Staff

Medical Review:

Adam Husney MD - Family Medicine

Martin J. Gabica MD - Family Medicine

Kathleen Romito MD - Family Medicine

Rhonda O'Brien MS, RD, CDE - Certified Diabetes Educator

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