

Eating Healthy on a Budget

Eating healthy can be difficult. Many people think one of the reasons is that it can cost more and make your grocery bill be more. That is not always the case.

According to a Harvard University School of Public Health study, it costs less than \$2.00 per day for a person to eat healthier. This study also found that by swapping out some less expensive and less healthy foods, for fresher and more nutritious ones added up to only about \$1.50 more per day.

Getting more of your nutrition and value for your money, at the grocery store, starts with planning before you head out to the store. For example, plan your meals and snacks for the week and then check your pantry to see what foods you already have. Then make a list of what you need to purchase. Then, stick to the list when shopping.

Also it is important to make informed choices as to where you are planning to shop for groceries. Take a look at the grocery store ads to see which store may have the items on your list on sale or offered at a discount. Once at the store, compare the prices of different brands and different sizes of the same brand to see which item has a lower unit price, which is typically located on the shelf directly below the produce.

Some other saving tips from USDA and the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics:

- Shop for foods that are in season, which are usually less expensive. You should only buy small amounts of fresh foods at a time, as some of the fresh vegetables and fruits only last a few days. This helps you to avoid wasting food.
- Try canned or frozen fruits and vegetables. For canned items choose fruit in 100 percent fruit juice and vegetables that are low in sodium.
- Buy in bulk. Smart choices are family packs of meat, larger bags of potatoes and frozen vegetables. Check ads for buy one get one free or other sales. You can reduce to smaller packaging for freezing if you need to.
- Make your own healthy snacks. Convenience costs money, so many snacks usually cost more when sold individually. Buy large tubs of low-fat yogurt, cottage cheese and divide them into one-cup containers. For trail mix, combine your own with nuts, dried fruit, pretzels and cereal and store in small portion air tight containers. Air-popped popcorn, and whole fresh fruits and vegetables tend to cost less than pre-packaged and pre-cut items.
- Certain foods are low-cost year around. For vegetables, carrots, greens or potatoes are good options. As for fruits, apples and bananas are good choices.
- Try weekly meal preparation. Prepare a large batch of your favorite recipes. Freeze portions in individual containers to eat throughout the week and you won't have to spend money on take-out meals.

If you choose to eat out, look for coupons, 2 for 2 deals, early bird specials or evening eating out at lunch instead of dinner to save money. Order water with your meal, which is not only free, but is a healthier option.