

# HEALTHY EATING ON A BUDGET

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With busy schedules, limited time to shop and prepare meals, and the rising cost of food, planning healthy meals for your family that fit within a budget can be a challenge. It is possible to prepare nutritious, cost-effective meals at home. The key lies in planning ahead and being aware of ways to save money at the grocery store.

## Plan Ahead

Before going to the store, plan your meals for the week. Determine what recipes you will prepare and the food items needed for each recipe. Create a shopping list to take with you to the store.

Organize your list by sections of the store: Fresh Produce, Dairy, Meat/Poultry/Fish, Canned Fruits/Vegetables/Beans, Bread/Rice/Pasta/Cereal, Frozen Food.

Having a grocery list when you shop can help reduce impulse buys and save time by eliminating the need to make multiple trips to the store during the week.

## Understand the Store Layout

**Perimeter of the store:** In general, fresh foods tend to be located along the outer perimeter of the store. This includes fruits, vegetables, meat and seafood departments, bread, eggs, cheese, and dairy.

**Interior aisles:** Along the interior of the store you will find mostly processed food items. Processed foods often contain added salt, sugar, and fat and are generally less healthy choices.

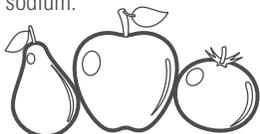
This does not mean to completely avoid the interior of the store, just be selective in your choices!

Canned fruits and vegetables, beans, and whole grain pasta, rice, bread, and breakfast cereals are all good choices.

## Cost-Saving Tips Throughout the Store:

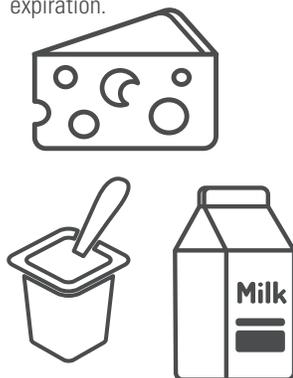
### Fruits and Vegetables:

- Buy fresh produce that is in season. When produce is in season it is less expensive and has more flavor.
- Buy whole, fresh fruits and vegetables and chop them yourself to save money.
- Frozen and canned fruits and vegetables last longer than fresh and make healthy additions to meals and snacks.
- When buying canned fruit look for fruit that is packed in water or in natural juices. Fruits canned in heavy syrup have added sugars.
- When buying canned vegetables, look for reduced sodium versions as regular canned vegetables are high in sodium.



### Dairy:

- Choose low-fat or fat free dairy items whenever possible; this includes milk, yogurt, and cheese.
- Purchase large containers (gallons, quarts, pints) of milk, yogurt, and cottage cheese rather than individual servings.
- Make sure to check the expiration date on items. Only purchase the amount your family can consume prior to expiration.



### Protein:

- Look for in-store specials on meat, chicken, and seafood - buy those items that are on sale.
- Buy bulk packages of beef, chicken, and pork. Freeze what you will not need for the weekly meals. Buying large packages is less expensive.
- Canned tuna and salmon are a great way to add seafood to your weekly meal plan at a lower cost than fresh seafood.
- Add eggs, beans, and peanut butter to your meals, all are good sources of protein that are less expensive options.



### Whole Grains:

- Purchase the store-brand (generic) of your favorite whole grain items, including bread, breakfast cereal, pasta, rice, crackers, and granola bars.
- Rather than buying single-serving packages of cereal, crackers, and other grain items, buy in bulk and individually pack the items yourself.
- Check the ingredient label to make sure the first word is "whole" to know you are truly getting a whole grain item.



## Other Money Saving Tips

- Do not grocery shop when you are hungry! When you are hungry you will be more tempted to buy things that are not on your list.
- Use coupons wisely! If you would not normally buy the item without a coupon, avoid the desire to purchase it just because you have a coupon.
- Avoid the temptations of the check-out line (magazines, candy, chips, toys). If it is not on your list, don't buy it!

### REFERENCE:

<https://www.choosemyplate.gov/budget>

