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25 Ways to Eat Healthier on a Budget

You don't have to choose between healthy eating and your bank account. Follow these tips to make healthy food choices. Your stomach and your wallet will thank you!

Plan ahead

- **Create a meal plan.** Look for healthy budget-friendly recipes with the same ingredients but different preparations.
- **Plan meals around food you already have.** Check your cupboards, freezer, and fridge; eat perishable food before it spoils.
- **Make a grocery list.** Write down the ingredients and quantities you need.
- **Think leftovers.** Plan to buy enough ingredients that'll make the meal last several days.
- **Use coupons.** Check the newspaper or look online for coupons and sales. Plan your meals around healthy foods that are on sale.
- **Sign up for a rewards card.** Most stores offer free loyalty programs. Earn points and take advantage of special promotions.
- **Shop local and in season.** Farmers markets sell in-season produce at lower prices than most grocery stores.
- **Pick your own produce.** To have fun while you shop and save money, pick your own produce at local farms.
- **Grow your own.** Plant a vegetable garden or grow herbs.
- **Don't shop hungry.** Eat before shopping to avoid making unhealthy impulse buys.

At the store

- **Buy whole fruits and vegetables.** You pay extra for precut produce, so save money by cutting it yourself.
- **Check unit prices.** Compare unit prices such as price per pound, ounce, or quart for the best deals. Buying in bulk is typically cheaper than buying regular-sized items.
- **Keep waste to a minimum.** Don't buy more perishable foods than you will eat. And only buy food in bulk if you know you have enough room to store it at home.
- **Grab from the back of the shelf.** That's where grocery stores stock the freshest items. Check sell-by dates to ensure perishable foods last as long as possible.
- **Buy frozen produce.** If you can't get fresh produce, consider buying it frozen. It'll last longer!
- **Find new protein sources.** Try a whole chicken instead of individual cuts, canned seafood, or other affordable protein sources, such as beans, lentils, and eggs.
- **Pick up ingredients, not premade meals.** Packaged and processed foods might be convenient, but they cost more and often contain high quantities of hidden salt, fat, and sugar.
- **Get the store brand.** Save money without sacrificing quality by avoiding name brands.
- **Skip the soda aisle.** Cut calories and costs by drinking water instead. If you want some extra flavor, try adding a slice of lemon or lime to your glass.
- **Stick to your list.** You spent time planning your grocery list, so don't stray from it!

At home

- **Put your groceries away.** Get perishable foods in the fridge or freezer right away.
- **Prepare meals in advance.** Choose the best day to prepare meals. Then make plenty of food so that you have healthy meals ready to go on your busiest days. You can also freeze these meals.
- **Be creative with leftovers.** Leftover meats, vegetables, and grains make great soups, for example.
- **Eat fruit for dessert.** Make healthy fruit-based desserts rather than buying unhealthy packaged desserts.
- **Consider the long-term savings.** Eating healthy is an investment in you that can minimize health care costs down the road.