

HEALTHY EATING ON A BUDGET

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You can eat healthy and reduce meal costs by increasing your knowledge of nutrition, by improving your food shopping expertise and by enhancing your cooking skills. Of course, all this will take an investment in time on your part.

The following is a compilation of money-saving tips that can help you eat well on a budget:

- First, instead of buying your morning coffee at a convenience store or gas station, prepare coffee at home and bring it to work in a travel mug.**
- Pack your lunch. This is always cheaper than going to the local deli for a sandwich or eating in the company cafeteria. And because lunch is under your control, it should be more nutritious.**

- **Minimize dining out. Home-cooked meals are clearly a lot less expensive than eating out.**
- **Current Dietary Guidelines for Americans seem to be budget-independent, often recommending healthy but exotic foods like steel-cut oats and imported olive oil. Sure many healthy foods often cost more – but they don't have to. Lots of inexpensive nutrient-rich foods can be found in your local supermarket. Most are foods that you've always know, that taste good, are nutritious – and inexpensive.**
- **For instance, rather than fresh salad greens, try some cheaper but equally healthy alternatives such as cabbage, carrots, escarole and potatoes. (Yes, potatoes are in fact very nutritious, low-calorie, high in fiber, and are low-cost.) The nutrients-per-cost of beans, eggs, milk, canned tuna and some soups are hard to beat.**
- **To eat healthy you not only have to know something about nutrition but you also have to know how to cook. So spend the time to acquire the cooking skills you need to prepare delicious, healthy, low-cost meals.**

- **Start collecting recipes. Use cookbooks and print out online recipes – or gather the recipes in a folder on your computer.**
- **Plan a weeks worth of meals based on foods that are on special that week. Be sure to include breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks.**
- **Grocery bills can add up quickly. So find out which supermarket has the lowest prices and shop there. It is also important to prepare a grocery list before you go shopping.**
- **Look for money-saving coupons in newspapers, magazines and online.**
- **Buy bulk items (like flour, rice, potatoes, canned goods, frozen vegetables, and seafood) when they are on sale.**
- **Remember that pre-made meals, prepared foods and junk foods tend to be the most expensive. (And even when they appear to be cheap, they're bad for your health.)**
- **When meats and poultry are on sale, buy larger quantities and freeze individual cuts in freezer paper or freezer bags.**
- **Fresh produce is often a good buy, especially when in season, but to curtail**

waste due to spoilage don't buy more than what you will eat in a few days.

- **Be careful in the check-out aisle. Don't blow your budget buying a candy bar or a headline-grabbing magazine. Stick with your list of healthy affordable foods.**
- **For a traditional dinner, fill one-quarter of each plate with a protein (like chicken), another quarter of the plate should contain a serving of a starch like potatoes or rice and the remaining half of the plate with fresh or frozen vegetables or a fresh salad.**
- **Choose recipes that use healthy cooking methods for meats, poultry and fish like baking, broiling, steaming, roasting and stir-frying. Avoid deep frying in oil.**
- **Buy cheaper, leaner cuts of meat. Not only will you save money but you will reduce the amount of saturated fat you consume – which is better for your health. Cheaper cuts are usually perfect for stews, soups and crock-pot meals.**
- **Look for recipes that use beans as a protein source. Beans are much cheaper than meats, poultry and seafood.**
- **Try different ways to prepare the same foods so your meals don't get boring. For**

example, potatoes can be baked, boiled, roasted or mashed and be sure to vary the raw vegetables in your salads.

- **Prepare meals in larger quantities and use leftovers for home-made frozen meals. Remember to freeze foods in microwave-safe containers, or make foil pouches that can be put in an oven for re-heating.**
- **Make your own snacks using nuts, dry cereals and raisins. Divide the snacks into individual portions to control calorie intake.**

Yes eating healthy on a budget takes know how, planning and time, but you can save lots of money and still serve healthy, tasty meals.