

# Eating Healthy On a Budget



It can be challenging to eat healthy, well balanced meals on a fixed income. To help with this tips are listed below to help you eat well and reduce your grocery bill. Tips are also given for each food group of Canada's Food Guide.

## Get ready, get set and go

The first step for successful shopping is to know what you need when you buy groceries.

- Plan your meals. Make a list before grocery shopping and stick to it.
- Buy healthier staples for your pantry, fridge and freezer.
- Check flyers for weekly specials before you go shopping.
- Use coupons for foods that you normally eat.
- Take advantage of unit pricing. The unit price is the price per amount/volume which is pre-calculated for you. It is usually found in small print on the grocery shelf price tag. For example the tag may say 0.74/100g – this means you are paying 74 ¢ for 100g of the product. You can compare different products and different sized containers/packages to see which one is the best buy for you.

- Generic or “no name” products are usually cheaper than brand name ones and similar in nutritional value.
- Shop on a full stomach. Studies show that you are more likely to buy extra foods and/or items that are not on your list if you are hungry.
- Choose wisely at convenience stores. You can pay more for the extra convenience.
- Make ready-made purchases count. Best ready-to-eat buys include pre-cut vegetables; pre-cut fruits; ready-made salads; frozen vegetables; frozen fruits.
- Frozen dinners are quite expensive per serving and are often very high in salt, unhealthy fats and/or sugars. Once or twice a week, make a batch of something and freeze in individual containers. This makes it easier to grab and go.

## Vegetables and Fruits



- Buy fresh vegetables and fruits when in season.
- Grow your own vegetables and fruits.
- Buy the amount of fresh vegetables and fruits that you can use. Consider parboiling

or blanching extra vegetables and freezing. That way you reduce waste and the cost of the vegetable or fruit.

- Buy plain bagged frozen vegetables instead of those packaged with sauces and seasonings. Ones with sauces and seasonings tend to be more costly and higher in salt.
- Use frozen vegetables and fruits during the off season. These are just as nutritious as fresh and you can use the amount that you need and not have to worry about spoilage like the fresh.
- Use canned vegetables and fruits during the off season. There are low sodium and lower sugar cans available. You can always rinse can contents too.

## Whole Grains



- Buy whole grain breads, pastas and rice when on sale. Pastas and rice can be stored in a dark, dry place for several years. Breads can be frozen for months.
- Buy plain ready-to-eat whole grain cereals. Pre-sweetened varieties are more expensive and less nutritious. Add your favorite fruits, nuts or seeds.
- Buy larger packages of whole grain cereal instead of the individual serving size packages.
- Make your own whole grain baked goods from scratch. It is cheaper than buying store-bought baked goods and you can control the ingredients.

## Proteins – Calcium Rich



- Milk and yogurt are fortified with vitamin D. Cheese contains calcium but lacks fortification of vitamin D.
- Check the best before dates on all milk products.
- Consider skim milk powder. It is cheaper and easier to store. It is an excellent source of calcium and protein. Skim milk can be used in cooking and baking and you can mix it with cartons of milk to make the carton milk last longer.
- Canned milk can be an option for cooking and baking. Choose lower fat versions such as skim or 1% milk fat.
- Choose generic or “no name” brand cheeses. Try to find ones with 20% milk fat or less. Choose stronger flavoured cheeses such as extra old or Swiss. You normally need less to get the same taste.
- Buy plain yogurt and add your own fruit, nuts, seeds or high fibre cereals.

## Proteins – Iron Rich

- Buy larger quantities of meats, fish and poultry when they are on sale. Divide them into individual or smaller servings and freeze for later use.
- Eat smaller servings of meat, fish and poultry – remember a single serving from Canada’s Food Guide is a little smaller than the size of a deck of cards.
- Try less expensive plant based proteins such as beans, lentils, canned fish, nut butters and eggs.

