



Transform Your Health Through Nutrition:

How to choose (and
prepare) the best foods!

By:

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Introduction

Good nutrition is the foundation of good health. No amount of exercise can make up for a poor diet. You need to fuel your body with the right foods in order to achieve optimal health. Are you ready to take charge of your health? Then this booklet is for you!

Many people are under the misconception that eating healthy means you have to buy expensive food and that it has to taste bland. Nothing could be further from the truth! There are ways to choose healthy foods without breaking the bank, as well as prepare these foods so that they taste great.

In this booklet you will learn how to grocery shop effectively, choose the most nutrient dense foods, and then prepare them in a healthy manner.

Now let's get started!

Grocery Shopping: Making the Most of Your Food Dollar

Food is getting so expensive! What can I do to help save money when I grocery shop?

Here are a few suggestions to help you spend less money on groceries:

- **Plan meals in advance:** Before you shop, spend a few minutes to plan several menus for the week. Make a list and stick to it.
- **Look for sales:** Know the prices of the food you normally buy. This will help you spot sales more easily.
- **Read sale flyers:** Plan to use sale foods in your weekly meals.
- **Check unit pricing:** Most stores place unit pricing on the shelves. The unit price tells you how much you spend per unit, such as per ounce or per pound. It might surprise you to learn that sometimes the smaller quantities are the better buy per unit price.
- **Read signs carefully:** Sometimes the signs on store shelves are placed to draw attention to an item that is not actually a sale item.
- **Buy only what you need:** If you do not have storage space or will not eat a perishable food before it goes bad, buying it on sale is not a good idea.
- **Compare prices:** Check the prices of national brands, store brands, and generic items. In most cases, these items differ little in quality, but have a big difference in price, especially with staples like salt, sugar, flour, and milk. Store brand cereals, juices, and canned goods often have similar quality at a much lower price.
- **Use coupons carefully:** Purchase only the items you would normally buy. Do not buy something new or expensive just because you have a coupon.
- **Shop at a good time:** Arrive at the store when it is not crowded and when you are not rushed.
- **Eat first:** Never shop on an empty stomach. Your hunger will tempt you to buy more food.
- **Buy fewer “empty-calorie” foods:** Avoid purchasing sodas, chips, cakes, cookies, and candy. Using less of this type of food will help you save money and your waistline.

What can I do to save money at home?

It is important to keep track of the food you have and try not to waste anything. For example, keep a list of what is stored in your freezer, so nothing gets lost, ends up with freezer burn, and then gets tossed out. The same goes for perishable fruits, vegetables, and dairy foods. If you have some opened cheese, for example, plan to use it in a meal or snack before it goes bad. Instead of letting the grapes rot in the drawer of the refrigerator, place them on the counter for the family to snack on.

Also, make sure you use, not throw away, your leftovers. If you overcook, place the leftovers in airtight containers, refrigerate, and use them within a few days. Plan a “leftovers” night, where everyone in the family enjoys their favorite foods that are in the refrigerator.

Convenience foods such as frozen breakfast sandwiches are great to have available, but are much more expensive than scrambling some eggs and making some toast. A savvy consumer must

weigh the difference between convenience and how much a food costs. If money is tight, using fewer convenience foods usually will save you money in the long run.

My kids are always hungry and thirsty. I spend a fortune on snack foods for them. How can I save on these types of foods?

Individually packaged snacks and drinks usually are more expensive per unit than large containers. Often the extra cost is in the packaging, so buy a big box of crackers instead of individual bags. Buy juice by the half gallon and pour it into a cup for your child. Plan ahead if you need to have snacks on the run, and pack them in plastic bags and travel cups.

What is the rule of thumb about foods that are less expensive?

Food prices can vary from region to region and season to season. However, it is generally safe to say that meats are a more expensive protein source than eggs and beans (black-eyed peas, pinto beans, etc). Beans are a great bargain. They are inexpensive and full of nutrients. Including beans in your meal planning is great for your pocketbook and your health. Many people on very tight food budgets opt for a beans-and-rice meal, bean soup, or something similar each week as a nutritious way to help keep food costs down.

Is it true that healthy foods are more expensive?

Not necessarily! For example, the cost of a large bag of chips is about the same or more than a large bag of peeled and washed carrots. A gallon of skim milk costs less than a 12-pack of soda in most cases. Frozen vegetables are healthy and often less expensive than fresh vegetables, and meats and poultry are often on sale for far less than you can buy prepared entrées. If you learn to compare prices, shop for sale items, and stop buying empty-calorie foods and drinks, you can eat a healthy diet without destroying your food budget.

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What Are Nutrient-Dense Foods?

Nutrient-dense foods are those foods that provide the most vitamins, minerals, and phytonutrients for the fewest calories. They are the exact opposite of “empty calories,” which get so much attention. Choosing the highest quality foods helps make the most of daily caloric intake and should provide the majority of calories in any healthful diet. Different sources define what constitutes a nutrient-dense food differently, but most experts would agree that nutrient-dense foods are wholesome and void of additives that do not promote health and well-being.

The following are nutrient-dense foods.

Fresh fruits

- Apricots
- Bananas
- Berries
- Cantaloupe
- Grapes
- Kiwi
- Mangoes
- Oranges/clementines
- Papaya
- Peaches
- Nectarines
- Pomegranates
- Watermelon

Vegetables

- Broccoli
- Brussels sprouts
- Carrots
- Cauliflower
- Leafy greens
- Peppers
- Sweet potatoes
- Tomatoes

Protein

- Eggs
- Ground beef (90%–95% lean)
- Beef, eye round roasts
- Pork loin
- Salmon
- Sirloin steak
- Skinless poultry

Dairy

- Reduced-fat cheese
- Low-fat cottage cheese
- Skim or low-fat milk
- Fat-free or low-fat yogurt

Breads/grains/cereals

- Amaranth
- Barley
- Bread, 100% whole wheat or grain
- Brown rice
- Bulger
- Cereals, whole grain or bran
- Crackers, whole wheat
- Oats and oatmeal
- Pasta, 100% whole wheat
- Pita bread, whole wheat
- Quinoa
- Spelt
- Tortilla, whole wheat

Canned foods

- Beans and lentils, canned or dry
- Fruit in water or own juice
- Sardines
- Soup, low sodium
- Tuna, lite in water
- Vegetables (including tomato sauce)

Frozen foods

- Fruit
- Fruit-juice bars
- Vegetables without sauce

- Veggie burgers
- Waffles, whole grain

Packaged snacks

- Dried fruit
- Nuts, unsalted
- Popcorn, air popped or lite
- Sunflower seeds

Dressings/oils/sauces

- Fruit-only spreads or low-sugar spreads
- Herbs and spices

- Hummus
- Oil, canola, olive, and walnut
- Salad dressing, low fat
- Salsa
- Tomato sauce, no added salt

Beverages

- 100% fruit juice
- Vegetable or tomato juice, low sodium

Tips for shopping

Look for deep, rich colors

Choose fruits and vegetables that are deep and rich in color. Darker produce tends to have a higher vitamin and mineral content.

Choose nutrient-dense products

Select whole-grain products, lower-fat dairy products, lean meats, seafood, eggs, beans, and nuts. Avoid foods that are refined or overly processed.

Shop around the perimeter

Do most of your grocery shopping around the perimeter of the grocery store, where all of the freshest foods are. Go up and down the aisles for only select items, such as tomato sauce, dried beans, and cereals.

Drink water

Most beverages do not provide nutrient-dense calories.

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Cooking and Baking Tips

Meat, poultry, and fish

- Season with herbs and spices, instead of salt, sauces, or butter
- Remove skin and fat from meat and poultry before cooking
- Cook meat or poultry on a rack, so that the fat will drain off
- Replace half of the ground beef in a recipe with texturized soy protein
- Use Canadian bacon in place of regular bacon
- Choose low-fat/low-sodium broths
- Buy meat in 4-ounce (oz) portions

Fish: Fish retains its moisture well when cooked in the microwave. A 6-oz, 1"-thick filet takes about 3 minutes to cook.

Beef: Use leaner cuts of meat, which usually are tougher, such as chuck roast, brisket, and flank steak. Stewing and braising are the best cooking methods for this type of meat.

Cook en papillote: Place fish, shellfish, poultry, and/or vegetables into pouches (traditionally heart shaped) of parchment paper or aluminum foil. Douse with wine, juice, or other cooking medium, crimp the edges to seal, and bake. This is, in essence, a steaming process.

Try these healthy recipe suggestions:

- Substitute vegetable oil and hickory-smoked turkey wings, backs, or neck meat for bacon fat, sautéing the oil and meat together for 10 minutes, and then use 1–2 teaspoons of the oil to flavor your dish
- Substitute beef tenderloin for beef rib eye, eye of the round for top round, lean pork chops for pork ribs, and any cut of venison for any cut of beef
- Use portobello mushrooms in place of beef
- To bread poultry the low-fat way, dip skinless chicken pieces in skim milk or egg white and crushed low-fat, unsweetened cereal:
 - Bake breaded chicken on a sheet that has is sprayed with nonstick cooking spray
 - For a Tex-Mex alternative, use crushed baked tortilla chips

Soups and salads

- Use a pureed potato in place of cream to thicken soup
- “Sweat” the vegetables used in soup in wine or stock instead of fat
- Substitute beans for meat in chili
- Try flavored vinegar and olive oil dressings
- Use orange or lemon juice in place of some of the oil in homemade dressings

Baked goods

- Use vegetable oil in place of shortening, butter, or margarine, whenever possible
- Try replacing half of the fat in any recipe with applesauce or mashed banana
- Substitute whole-grain flours in place of all-purpose flour

- Replace whole milk or cream with skim milk or buttermilk
- Replace whole eggs with egg substitute or egg whites (use two egg whites in place of each whole egg)
- Frost a cake with marshmallow cream—it is fat free
- Use 3 oz of unsweetened cocoa powder mixed with 1 tablespoon of sunflower seed oil in place of 1 oz of baking chocolate

Other tips

- Use plain low-fat yogurt in place of sour cream or mayonnaise
- Use nonstick pans and cooking spray instead of oil, whenever possible
- Use whipped butter in place of stick butter, if you must use butter at all
- Replace cream cheese with Neufchâtel cheese—saves 33% of the fat
- Grate fresh Parmesan on your food right before serving for a powerful punch of flavor
- Make your own fat-free tartar sauce by combining two parts low-sodium sweet relish to one part fat-free mayonnaise
- Microwave diced onion with a little liquid for 1–2 minutes instead of cooking the onion in oil on the stove

The following fruits and vegetables add sweetness to any dish:

- Caramelized onions
- Carrots
- Vine-ripened tomatoes
- Apples
- Sweet berries
- Pears
- Sweet bell peppers
- Pimientos
- Pineapple

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