

Lower the Cost of Healthy Eating

PARENTS ASK

I want my family to eat healthy foods. But I worry about how much it will cost. We're doing what we can. How do other families do it?

People often think it costs more to eat healthy. But it doesn't have to cost more. Studies show that's not true. It doesn't cost more to eat healthy. It costs the same as eating unhealthy. It's all about how you spend your money.

True, you may spend more on fresh fruits and vegetables. That's especially true if you haven't been buying fresh fruits and vegetables in the past. But you'll spend less on pricey RED food snacks. Less on fats, oils, and sweets. Less on processed and prepared foods. Less on fast foods. Less at restaurants.

In the end, eating healthy won't cost any more. There are a lot of ways to save money when you eat healthy. It balances out. It could cost less. And it will be a lot healthier. That's what is most important.

We can show you ways to make it both cheap and easy. In general, you buy the plain version of a food. Then

you season it yourself. This is cheaper than buying the flavored version. It also gives you more control. You can make foods taste just the way you like.

Tips for Healthy Shopping and Cooking

Plan ahead.

1. Plan your meals a week ahead of time.
2. Use your menus to make a grocery list.
3. Build the main part of your meal around rice, noodles, or other grains. Be sure to watch portion size.
 - ▶ Use small amounts of meat, poultry, fish, or eggs.
 - ▶ Make meat a side dish, not the main course.
 - ▶ Be sure to include vegetables and fruit.

For example, you can make a healthy casserole by mixing rice, vegetables, and a small amount of meat or beans. Add grated low-fat cheese.

KEY GOALS

Keep your child focused on 4 key goals:

- ⊙ Limit RED foods
- ⊙ Increase GREEN activity
- ⊙ Hold Family Meetings
- ⊙ Keep Track of Weight

4. Use planned leftovers to save both time and money. For example:

- ▶ Cook chicken on Monday. Put the leftovers away before serving. Use the leftovers in a stir-fry, a casserole, or sandwiches in a day or two.
- ▶ Freeze leftover meats. Use them later in soups and stews.

Make meat a side dish, not the main course.

Here's what you'll learn about in this module:

- ▶ Plan ahead for healthy eating
- ▶ How you can afford to eat healthy
- ▶ How to make shopping easier and cost less
- ▶ How getting involved with shopping and cooking will help your child
- ▶ How to get your child involved



Buy fresh fruits and vegetables when they are in season. Pick firm fruits and vegetables.

5. Do batch cooking when your food budget and time allow.

For example, make a big pot of chili or spaghetti sauce. Have some for dinner. Divide the rest into meal-size portions. Freeze it for later. Do this before serving dinner. Then extra food won't be around for people to fill up on.

Prepare just before you shop.

1. Review your weekly menu.
2. List all the foods you need.
3. Look for specials in newspaper ads.
4. Look for coupons for the foods you plan to buy. Remember that a coupon only saves you money if it's for food you need.
5. Find out about food buying clubs, cooperatives, and farmers' markets.

Shop smart.

1. Buy extra low-cost nutritious foods like rice, potatoes, and noodles. They keep well.
2. Buy no-name or store brands. They usually cost less and are just as good.
3. Buy only the food you will eat before it spoils.
4. Don't buy pre-packaged meals or prepared foods.
 - ▶ These convenience foods cost more.

- ▶ They use more fat, sugar, and salt.
- ▶ You can prepare similar foods from scratch.

5. Use date information to help choose the freshest foods.

6. Use the Nutrition Facts labels.

7. Use unit pricing to compare similar foods.



Breads and Grains

1. Buy grains, pasta, and cereals in bulk. Stock up when they are on sale.
2. Buy regular rice, oatmeal, pasta, and grits. Don't buy the instant or flavored types.
3. Buy whole-grain bread, cereals, and brown rice. They add nutrients.
4. Don't buy fancy pasta shapes. They cost more than spaghetti or macaroni.
5. Look for bargains on day-old bread.



Vegetables and Salads

1. Buy fresh vegetables in season. They are better and cheaper.
2. Don't buy foods at the salad bar. They can be costly.
3. Don't buy frozen vegetables with sauces or flavors added. They cost more. Add your own seasoning to plain vegetables.
4. Don't buy prepared or pre-cut raw vegetables like carrots or celery. They cost more.
5. Look for large bags of frozen vegetables. They may be bargains. Cook just

what you need. Close the bag tightly, and put the rest in the freezer.

6. Pick firm vegetables.



Fruits

1. Buy canned fruit packed in water or unsweetened juice if you buy canned fruit. Fresh or frozen fruit is healthier.
2. Buy fresh fruits in season. They are better and cheaper.
3. Pick firm fruits.



Meat and Meat Alternatives

1. Buy chuck or bottom round roast instead of sirloin. They cost less and have less fat. Cover them during cooking. Cook them longer to make the meat tender.
2. Buy only the leanest (at least 90%) ground meats. Check the percent of fat on the label.
3. Buy plain frozen fish, not the kind with batter.
4. Don't buy meats that come with sauces, stuffing, or flavorings. They cost more.
5. Don't buy pricey stewing beef. Buy a cheaper steak (like round steak). Cut it up yourself for use in the stew.
6. Look for specials on GREEN and YELLOW foods at the meat counter.

Plan healthy meals for the week with your child.

One day Alicia noticed that her mother was making salad dressing out of water, lemon, balsamic vinegar, and some spices. "Why don't you just buy salad dressing, Mom? Wouldn't that be faster?"

"It would," her mother said. "But it wouldn't be as healthy."

"Why not?" Alicia asked. "Can't you buy low-fat dressing?"

"Sure we could," her mother said. "But that would be more costly. I'm trying to use some healthy cooking and shopping tips to make our meals healthier. At the same time, I'm trying to keep the cost down. By buying the right foods, I can do both. Of course, it takes some planning."

"That's interesting," said Alicia. "I'd like to learn about it. Maybe I could help."

"That would be great," Alicia's mother said. She knew that learning these skills would help Alicia. It would also help her.

They made a plan. First Alicia would look over the healthy shopping and cooking tips. That would give her some understanding of what her mother was trying to do. She would help her mother cook one meal this week. At the end of the week, she would help her mother plan the meals for next week. Then they would make their grocery list.

Alicia asked lots of questions when she cooked with her mother. Her mother took time to explain what they were doing and why they were doing it. It helped her understand how to make meals healthier.

Then Alicia and her mother went shopping. They bought non-fat milk. They bought large bags of frozen vegetables. They stayed away from the salad bar. They bought fruits and vegetables that were in season.

They also talked about why they were buying certain foods when they shopped. Alicia learned why they bought brown rice instead of white rice. She learned why they bought spaghetti instead of fancy pasta shapes. She also learned why they left out packaged meals.

Alicia helped her mother put the food away. They rearranged the pantry. They cleaned out the refrigerator. This helped Alicia know where the foods were.

Then Alicia had another idea. "Let's post the list of tips for healthy eating. We can also post the shopping tips and our weekly menus too. That way I can just look things up when I'm not sure," she said.

"Great idea," her mother said.

How can you get your child involved in healthy shopping and cooking?



Shop with your child for healthy foods. Prepare 1 or 2 meals a week together.

7. Stock up on dry or canned beans, peas, and lentils. They have the same food value as meat and are much cheaper. They cost less and are also lower in fat.

1. Buy fat-free or low-fat milk. Only children under age 2 should have whole milk.

2. Buy fresh milk, cheese, and yogurt in the largest size you can. Then divide them into smaller portions. This costs less. Be sure to check the expiration date.

3. Buy non-fat dry milk. This is the least costly. Mix what you need several hours ahead. Refrigerate it so that it gets cold.



Milk and Milk Products

Explain to your child that healthy shopping will help you

- ▶ Limit what you spend on food.
- ▶ Eat healthy meals and snacks.
- ▶ Lose weight.
- ▶ Help your child manage diabetes.

4. Don't buy prepared products like grated cheese, string cheese, or yogurt in tubes. They cost a lot more.

How should my child be involved in cooking and shopping? From time to time I ask him to help me. But it's not a regular thing.

PARENTS ASK:

Shopping and cooking healthy meals are important activities. This is a lot of work for one person. You shouldn't do it alone. It should be part of the family routine. That would be good for everyone.

Help from your son will save you time. It will also help your son. He'll feel good about himself knowing he's helping out. He'll also learn a lot. What he learns will help him prepare healthy foods for himself. These will be important skills throughout his life.

Here's what to talk to him about:

- ▶ Helping you plan healthy meals a week in advance.
- ▶ Shopping with you.
- ▶ Learning money-saving tips for when you shop.
- ▶ Helping you put the food away. Then he'll know where to find it.
- ▶ Cooking with you. He could start by helping prepare 1 or 2 meals a week. Encourage him to learn how to prepare all the foods in a meal himself.

- ▶ Learning and using the healthy shopping and cooking tips.

PARENTS ASK:

I don't know all these shopping and cooking tips myself. How can I teach them to my child?

How can you teach what you are still learning yourself? You can. You don't have to be an expert. You don't have to pretend to be. Tell her that you're in the process of learning new habits yourself. Say you want to team up with her. Say you want to learn together. You'll show her what you know. You'll experiment together with other things. You'll help each other learn. This will make it even more of an adventure.

Talk with her about how you will go about it. The long-term goal is for her to learn how to do these things herself. Plan some short-term steps that will help her move in that direction. Start by identifying 1 or 2 meals she will cook with you this week. Set a time to make a menu for next week. Set a time to shop together. This will get you going.

How to help your child

- ▶ Make the weekly menu together.
- ▶ Identify 1 or 2 meals she will cook with you this week.
- ▶ Go over the tips for healthy shopping and cooking.
- ▶ Shop and cook together.

How to help yourself

- ▶ Plan healthy meals a week ahead.
- ▶ Get to know the tips for healthy shopping and cooking.



Save money by buying unprocessed food. Make them tasty by using Free Foods and spices.

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Why Shop For Healthy Foods?

Your child has a Help Sheet like this one. Fill this one out yourself. Then go over your sheet and your child's sheet together.

List 4 reasons to shop for healthy foods.

1.	3.
2.	4.

Answers: Save money, Eat healthy, Lose weight, Manage diabetes.

What's Healthy? What Saves Money? What Does Both?

- Studies show that eating healthy _____.
 - Costs more
 - Costs less
 - Is not more costly than unhealthy eating
 - All of the above
- One way you save money is by _____.
 - Buying lots of snack foods
 - Buying fewer RED foods
 - Buying fewer processed foods
 - B & C
- Another way to save money is by _____.
 - Buying large bags of frozen vegetables
 - Buying fresh fruits and vegetables in season
 - Using coupons
 - All of the above
- Using planned leftovers can _____.
 - Lead to wasted food
 - Save time and money
 - Lead to overeating
 - Waste time and money
- When you do batch cooking, you _____.
 - Waste food
 - Freeze food for use later
 - Save time
 - B & C

Answers: 1.C 2.D 3.D 4.B 5.D

What Else Do You Know About Healthy Shopping?

Read each item. Mark whether the item is true or false.

True	False	
		1. No-name or store brands are not as good. That's why they cost less.
		2. Whole-grain breads, cereals, and brown rice add nutrients.
		3. Fancy pasta shapes cost more than spaghetti or macaroni.
		4. Frozen vegetables with flavored sauces cost less and are healthier.
		5. Prepared or pre-cut raw vegetables like carrots or celery cost less.
		6. Non-fat dry milk is the least costly.
		7. String cheese and yogurt in tubes cost less.
		8. Prepared foods are generally more costly.
		9. Fresh vegetables in season are better and cheaper.
		10. Free Foods and spices can make unprocessed foods tasty.
		11. Meats that come with sauces, stuffing, or flavorings cost less.
		12. Beans, peas, and lentils have the same food value as meat.
		13. Foods at the salad bar are generally cheaper.
		14. Chuck or bottom round roast is cheaper than sirloin.
		15. Plain frozen fish is a better buy than fish with batter.

Answers
 1. F
 2. T
 3. T
 4. F
 5. F
 6. T
 7. F
 8. T
 9. T
 10. T
 11. F
 12. T
 13. F
 14. T
 15. T

How Much Do You and Your Child Spend On RED Foods?

Keep track of how much you and your child spend on RED food snacks and meals for a week. Work on it together. Help your child write down money spent on junk food, RED foods from fast-food restaurants, and vending machines. Do the same yourself. You could use this money to buy healthy foods.

Friday	Bought chips and soda from vending machines	\$2
Saturday	Ate at fast-food restaurant	\$8.50

Sunday		
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
TOTAL		

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What Have You Learned?

List some of the most important tips you've learned about shopping for healthy foods.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Save Money By Shopping Healthy.

List some ways your family can save money when you do healthy shopping.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Lower the Cost of Healthy Eating

It doesn't cost more to eat healthy.

- ▶ You may spend more on fruits and vegetables.
- ▶ You will spend less on:
 - ▶ Fast foods
 - ▶ Fats, oils, and sweets
 - ▶ Pricey RED food snacks
 - ▶ Processed and prepared foods
 - ▶ Restaurants

Involve your child.

- ▶ Talk about the reasons for getting involved.
- ▶ Pick 1 or 2 meals she will cook with you this week.
- ▶ Plan next week's meals together.
- ▶ Shop together.
- ▶ Go over the tips for healthy shopping and cooking.

Plan ahead.

1. Plan your meals a week at a time.
2. Use your menus to make a grocery list.
3. Build the main part of your meal around rice, noodles, or other grains. Watch your portions.
4. Make meat a side dish, not the main course.
5. Do batch cooking.
6. Use planned leftovers.

Before you shop

1. Review your weekly menu.
2. List all the foods you need.
3. Look for coupons and specials in newspaper ads.
4. Find out about food buying clubs, cooperatives, and farmers' markets.



Use the Best Buy Tips.

- ▶ Buy fresh fruits and vegetables when they are in season.
- ▶ Buy non-fat dry milk.
- ▶ Buy regular rice, oatmeal, pasta, and grits.
- ▶ Buy spaghetti or macaroni, not fancy pasta shapes.
- ▶ Look for:
 - ▶ Bargains on day-old bread
 - ▶ Large bags of frozen vegetables
 - ▶ Specials at the meat counter
- ▶ Stock up on dry or canned beans, peas, and lentils.

When you shop

1. Buy extra low-cost nutritious foods like rice, potatoes, and noodles.
2. Buy no-name or store brands.
3. Buy only the food you will eat before it spoils.
4. Don't buy pre-packaged meals.
5. Don't buy prepared foods.
6. Use date information, unit pricing, and Nutrition Facts labels.

