

Eating Healthy on a Budget

How often do you hear or say, “It is way too expensive to eat healthy”? This can be true when you are comparing a fresh pack of strawberries to a bag of chips or organic fruits to regular fruits. Nutritious food can be expensive, and it can be difficult to eat a well-balanced diet when you are living on a tight budget. The good news is that eating healthy can be more affordable than you think.

Here are some tips that can help you eat healthy when you are on a tight budget:

1. **Do not shop on an empty stomach.** Before you enter a grocery store, make sure you eat a fruit, vegetable, or a small handful of nuts. When you go grocery shopping on an empty stomach, you may end up spending more money because you are feeling hungry in that exact moment. Make sure your stomach is somewhat full before heading out!
2. **Plan your meals.** Always plan out the meals you are going to cook for the entire week, and create a shopping list with the ingredients you need. This will prevent you from buying extra food products that you do not necessarily need.
3. **Buy snacks that are filling and nutritious.** When comparing chips to nuts, which snack do you think will keep you feeling full longer? If you said nuts, you are correct. Even though a bag of chips is probably cheaper than a bag of nuts, consider which one will leave you feeling full for a longer period of time. Foods that do not fill you for a long time may cause you to eat more often. Eating more often will force you to spend more money.
4. **Look at what you have in your fridge and pantry before buying more.** Make sure you look in your kitchen at least once per week to see which food items you already have enough of. You may be able to make an entire meal with those food items.
5. **Buy store brands.** Buying store brand items can save you some money on your bill. Make sure you take a look at the nutrition facts and ingredients of the store brand item to ensure you are still getting a healthy product.
6. **Grow a garden.** What is a better way to save money than growing your own fruits and vegetables? Even if you do not have a yard, many fruits and vegetables can grow in pots placed in sunny areas around the house such as the patio. Having fresh produce in your backyard can save you money at the grocery store.
7. **Use coupons or try price-matching food items.** There are many stores that price-match products, i.e., if a bag of grapes is cheaper at a different store than the one you are in, you can tell an associate and they may give it to you for the lower price. Look at flyers of different grocery stores in your area or download an application such as Flipp which contains weekly digital flyers from stores that are closest to you. You can look through flyers or this application to find out which food items are on sale to price-match them before you go to the grocery store.
8. **Purchase nonperishable foods that are on sale in bulk.** It might seem expensive to buy a large pack of lentils upfront. However, the cost per unit usually tends to be cheaper. To



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calculate the price per unit, first find the common unit of measurement when comparing products. For example, a bag of lentils is usually measured in grams. Bag A of lentils costs \$7.99 for 900 grams, whereas Bag B of lentils costs \$4.99 for 700 grams. To figure out the price per unit, divide the price of the item by the total weight. Bag A is $\$7.99 / 900\text{g}$ which equals to \$0.009 per gram. Bag B is $\$4.99 / 700\text{g}$ which equals to \$0.007 per gram. Bag B is cheaper.

9. **Cook at home.** Cooking your meals at home can be cheaper than eating at a restaurant. Generally, you can feed your family of 4-5 for the same price as buying meals for two people at a restaurant. Meal prepping for the entire week or daily can save you loads of money. You will also have the benefit of knowing what ingredients were in your meal. Meals from restaurants are often loaded with excess calories, saturated fats, and sodium.



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