

EATING WELL ON A BUDGET

BEFORE YOU GO SHOPPING:

- ✓ **REVIEW YOUR COUPONS AND STORE ADS.** Coupons make items you usually buy cost less, but ONLY if you use them and aren't buying extra items just because "I have a coupon". Check newspaper ads or store flyers for specials.
- ✓ **SHOP AT HOME FIRST.** Check your pantry and refrigerator for items that you already have and can use with a few new items from the supermarket. Check the expiration dates on cans, and don't eat food from any can that is dented or damaged.
- ✓ **MAKE A LIST.** Avoid impulse purchases by keeping a running list on the refrigerator before you go to the grocery store ... and sticking to it.
- ✓ **DON'T SHOP HUNGRY.** If you don't have time for a snack at home, pick up a low calorie, healthy snack – a small bag of peeled baby carrots or mini rice cakes – to eat while you're shopping.
- ✓ **COMPARE COST VS. CONVENIENCE.** If you won't eat meals that you have to prepare yourself, buying whole, unprocessed foods won't save you money (even if it's healthier and more cost effective at the cash register). Buy prepared foods carefully since you're also paying for advertising and packaging.



AT THE MARKET:

- ✓ **SHOP SMART.** Shop at the store's off peak hours when you will be less rushed and can make better decisions. Watch the cash register – checkout errors can be costly. Put refrigerated and frozen items in the cart last – at home, store these foods properly so that they don't spoil.
- ✓ **SIGN UP FOR YOUR GROCER'S DISCOUNT CARD** for additional savings. Ask for a "rain check" – it's worth the wait at the courtesy counter when there's a super sale.



- ✓ **SHOP THE PERIMETER** of the store first where you'll find the basics for a healthful diet (fresh produce, meats, and dairy). Avoid going down every single aisle where the temptation of processed, prepared foods lurks.
- ✓ **BUY FRUITS AND VEGETABLES** in season, and visit your Farmer's Market for locally grown produce. Canned or frozen produce can be just as nutritious as fresh, and a good idea if fresh produce will spoil before you use it.

- ✓ **LOOK UP - LOOK DOWN.** The most costly name brands are typically placed at eye level. Store brands that are often cheaper, but just as good, are often placed higher or lower on the shelf.
- ✓ **USE THE UNIT PRICE** to check the cost per unit (ounce, pound, or pint). Don't be deceived by packaging: sometimes small sizes are more economical than jumbo packs.
- ✓ **WATCH OUT FOR "SALES" THAT AREN'T.** Read the price and cost per item labels carefully. Often something marked with a sale price isn't any cheaper than a similar product further down the aisle.
- ✓ **STOCK UP.** Buy extras of non-perishable items that you usually eat when they're on sale. **BUT** when buying foods that can spoil, only buy what you'll use before the expiration date ... even if it's on sale.
- ✓ **WANT A TREAT?** Watch for sales, wait for a coupon, or try the store brand.

WHEN YOU GET HOME:

- ✓ **DRINK YOUR MILK.** Used dried milk powder for recipes, use fluid milk for drinking. Only buy the size container that you'll realistically use before it spoils.
- ✓ **FLIP YOUR PLATE.** Many people plan their meals around meat as the "main course". Make grains, beans, and vegetables the main part of your meal and use meat, poultry, or fish as a "mix in". Experiment with bean-based chili or tacos, and vegetable-based stir fry, stew, or soup. Go meatless by eating two or more meatless meals each week.
- ✓ **MAKE IT FROM SCRATCH.** Chop it, mix it, prepare it yourself. While making food from scratch may take a little more time, you can control exactly what's in your food while you're saving money.
- ✓ **COOK ONCE, EAT TWICE.** Plan meals with recipes that can be doubled (or tripled) easily. Serve one meal, then label and freeze the others for a later date. This works well when "family size" packs of lean meat or poultry are on sale - it doesn't cost much more, take or any more time, to make a double (or triple) recipe.
- ✓ **EAT YOUR LEFTOVERS.** Not enough meat or chicken left for another night's dinner? Use it for sandwiches, or combine it with leftover vegetables to make a hearty soup. If leftovers don't seem very glamorous, just think of it as another way to recycle!
- ✓ **EAT AT HOME.** Frequent eating out can be disastrous to your pocketbook. Even spending just \$5 twice a week on a "value meal" for lunch or dinner adds up to more than \$500 per year!

