

5 tips for eating healthy on a budget



Enjoying delicious food and well-rounded meals packed with nutrients doesn't have to be more costly. Here are five tips to help you enjoy healthy and affordable meals.¹

1. Plan ahead

Eating healthy meals on a budget is easier when you plan ahead. The 10 minutes you spend planning meals can help you save time and money all week.

- Check your store's website or app for coupons and to see what's on sale.
- Plan meals before you shop. Knowing what you can get on sale and what's already in your pantry will help you stay on track. Check out MyPlate Kitchen or eatright.org for recipe ideas.²
- Make a list. This will help you avoid impulse purchases at the store.
- Think about how to use leftovers. For example, use extra veggies and rice in soups, salads, and stir-fries.

2. Shop smart

The first rule of grocery shopping on a budget is don't go to the store when you're hungry. All the junk food will be too hard to resist. Then, stick to your shopping list and:

- Buy big bags of dried beans, lentils, oats, and rice. These staple items are generally cheaper in large amounts.
- Choose frozen fruits and vegetables most of the year. They're cheaper, last longer, and are just as nutritious as fresh.

- Watch for deals on seasonal fruits and veggies. Enjoying peak-of-the-season berries, melons, squash, and corn can be a low-cost treat.³
- Explore generic or store brands. They're usually the same quality as name-brand items but less expensive.

3. Try new foods

Variety is the spice of life — and grocery shopping on a budget.

- Eat different proteins. Eggs, canned fish like tuna or salmon, tofu, beans, and legumes are easier on your wallet than meat. If you still want meat, look for sales on lean meat like chicken and turkey.
- Cook your meals and make extra. Cooking at home is cheaper and healthier. Plus, you know what's in your meal and can control the portion sizes. Leftovers from a home-cooked meal are a great alternative to take-out on a busy night.
- Grow a garden. It may take extra effort, but seeds are inexpensive, and you'll always know your produce is fresh.



4. Avoid convenience foods

It's hard to resist the lure of easy meals and snacks, especially when you're hungry or tired, or it's on sale.

- Buy fewer processed foods, such as hot dogs, frozen pizza, and chips. These are generally high in fat, sugar, and sodium.
- Avoid single-serving convenience foods, like cereal bars, sugary yogurts, and lunch snacks. They tend to be more expensive and less filling per serving.
- Steer clear of fast food. While pulling into the drive-thru may seem easy and cheap, it's generally less healthy and more expensive.⁴

5. Remember the benefits of eating healthy

It's important to remember the cost of a bad diet. Eating nutritious foods can help you save money over the long term by keeping your body strong.

Medical News Today says that the benefits of eating healthy include:⁵

- Reduced risk of diseases, like cancer, diabetes, and heart disease.
- Better memory.
- Improved mood.
- Healthy skin, teeth, and eyes.
- More energy and better sleep.
- Stronger immune system.

By thinking creatively and making healthy eating a priority, you'll see how far your food dollars can stretch.



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¹ Healthline: 19 Clever Ways to Eat Healthy on a Tight Budget (May 25, 2021): healthline.com.

² U.S. Department of Agriculture My Plate: Healthy Eating on a Budget (accessed November 2024): myplate.gov.

³ WebMD: What to Know About Seasonal Eating (February 25, 2024): webmd.com.

⁴ U.S. News: Is Fast Food Cheaper Than Cooking at Home? (September 20, 2024): moneyusnews.com.

⁵ Medical News Today: What are the benefits of eating healthy? (November 25, 2024): medicalnewstoday.com.

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