

10 Tips for Good Nutrition on a Fixed Budget

1. Decide in advance how much of your household budget you can afford to spend on food and stick to it.
2. Plan your meals in advance by making a weekly menu before you go shopping. Make a grocery list before you go shopping. Try to avoid shopping when you are hungry because you might be tempted to buy things not on your list.
3. Clip food coupons out of newspapers and note the sale items. Include those food items in your weekly menu.
4. Take advantage of grocery store sales by purchasing extra amounts of an item. You can prepare and freeze a favorite dish for additional meals when you may not feel like cooking. Good examples include soups, spaghetti sauce, chili and stews.
5. Do not buy something just because it is on sale unless it's something you usually eat. Stores frequently put unhealthy and overpriced items on sale to tempt you!
6. Shop at larger supermarkets to get the benefit of volume discounts.
7. Use store brands or generic "no-brands" because they are less expensive than national brands and usually contain the same ingredients.
8. Read the shelf label "unit cost" to decide if it may be less expensive to buy larger quantities (that will last longer for you) even though the total price is higher. Make sure it's an item you will use before it spoils.
9. Limit your purchases of prepared convenience foods, such as deli items or frozen meals, because they are generally more expensive than what you can make from scratch. You'll be paying a lot for the preparation, packaging and processing. These foods usually have a lot of added but hidden fat, sugar and salt, so you are paying more for less healthful foods. Make time in your schedule to prepare foods yourself such as:
 - homemade potato, tuna or chicken salad instead of deli-prepared
 - homemade cookies or brownies instead of packaged mixes
 - homemade salad dressing instead of bottled dressing
 - homemade biscuits instead of bakery-made or canned
 - fruits and vegetables or home-popped popcorn for snacks instead of chips, cakes, cookies or nutrition bars
10. Be creative and use leftovers for the next meal. One cup of almost anything can be saved or frozen instead of thrown away.
 - Vegetables, beans, meats, eggs, starches (rice, potatoes and pasta) can be used in salads, soups, stews and casseroles.
 - Bread can be used for bread pudding, stuffing, bread crumbs and French toast.
 - Fruit can be used to make salads, cobblers, muffins, jams or sliced on top of cereal.
 - Cheese can be used as a vegetable topping, tossed with pasta or frozen until you need it.
 - Meat can be sliced for sandwiches, stir-fried, or cooked into sauces or stuffed peppers.