

Smart Tips for Healthy Eating on a Budget



1. Learn to cook at home. You can eat well for less money by making simple, fresh, whole food recipes. The food industry wants us to believe that cooking is difficult, time-consuming, inconvenient, and expensive. Good quality, fresh food is easy to prepare and tastes delicious too.

2. Eat real food. Avoid or limit over processed inexpensive food (or faux food), especially food with a long list of unpronounceable ingredients. They tend to lack the nutrients your body needs, and the cost to your health is quite large. In most stores, shop the perimeter aisles of the store for fresh, healthy food.

3. Buy fresh produce when it's in season. Stick to buying what is currently in season (and preferably grown local) and consider stocking up when you find a good deal. In season produce is usually less expensive, at their peak flavor, and can usually be frozen.

4. Learn the Dirty Dozen. The dirty dozen is a list that is made every year by the Environmental Working Group that shares which 12 items of produce have the most pesticides on them. By simply buying those 12 items organically, you can cut down on 80% of your pesticide consumption.

5. Use store discounts and sales. Use coupons, online coupons and customer discount cards. Join your local co-op. As a member you have special owner sales, monthly discounts, plus you may receive an annual refund as an owner. At VNF, check out co-op and fresh deals too!



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6. Look for sales and plan meals accordingly. Instead of shopping for groceries based on your weekly meal plan, consider planning your meals around what is on sale. It can also force you to get creative and perhaps try some items or dishes you have never had.

7. Create a grocery list and stick to it. Before you head out to the store, look in your freezer, pantry cabinets, and refrigerator to note what you currently have on hand. Get in the store, stick to your amazing shopping list, and then quickly head out... so you do not buy impulse unhealthy items.

8. Shop alone. We tend to be more tempted to buy unhealthy food items not on the list when children are shopping with us. If possible, shop alone and stay focused on your well-planned grocery list.

9. Buy generic. Private-label store brands or generic foods are usually just as good as the name brand without the extra costs from marketing.

10. Stock up on frozen or pantry sale items. A sale is a great opportunity to stock up on frozen or pantry items, making it easy to always cook up something healthy at home.

11. Get creative with your protein. Think beyond the cow or the chicken. Be creative with quinoa, beans, nuts, eggs, Greek yogurt, leafy greens, and fish as additional sources of protein that may be less expensive.

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12. Embrace whole grains and beans. Beans and whole grains, like quinoa and brown rice are an inexpensive and tasty way to bulk up meals, and can even be a meal by themselves.

13. Plan and prep snacks and meals ahead. Whether it's veggies for the week, tomorrow's breakfast, lunch or dinner, prepping food in advance is a step in the right direction towards eating healthy. Plus, it's also a good way to make sure you're eating what's in the fridge, to minimize waste.

14. Double your recipes. Think about larger recipes with enough servings for multiple meals. This can reduce the number of ingredients you need to buy and save you time preparing another meal.

15. Repurpose leftovers. If you don't like eating the same meals over and over, consider repurposing leftovers into an entirely new and delicious meal.

16. Resist buying water in plastic bottles. It is less expensive and better for the environment to invest in a glass water bottle and a water filter.

17. Limit Restaurants. Spend less money on going out to eat and spend more on food in your home. Write down how much money and time you spend on coffees, grab-and-go meals, and other conveniences that may be impacting your health and wallet.

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18. Ignore the food industry media. The food industry spends billions of dollars each year and has become incredibly crafty at convincing us that sugary, processed foods are a real value. In the bigger picture, that “value menu” is anything but a value.

19. Give up the “drugs.” Research shows eating healthy, whole, real food isn’t necessarily more expensive than eating junk food, fast food, or convenience foods. In fact, the top four things purchased in supermarkets are ALL drugs: sugar, caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol! If you give up those “drugs,” your grocery bill will go down dramatically.

20. Join a community-supported agriculture (CSA) program. Buy direct and cut out the middleman. Get organic, mostly seasonal, local vegetables weekly. You don’t get to choose what you your receive, but it may cause you to be a more creative cook.

2019 Pesticides in Produce. Research from the Environmental Working Group www.ewg.org
The Dirty 20 List (most pesticides in the produce): Strawberries, spinach, kale, nectarines, apples, grapes, peaches, cherries, pears, tomatoes, celery, potatoes, sweet bell peppers, cherry tomatoes, lettuce, cucumbers, blueberries, hot peppers, plums, green beans.

The Clean 20 (least amount of pesticides): Avocados, sweet corn, pineapples, sweet frozen peas, onions, papayas, eggplants, asparagus, kiwis, cabbage, cauliflower, cantaloupes, broccoli, mushrooms, honeydew melons, watermelons, sweet potatoes, bananas, mangos, summer squash

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