



Your summer guide to healthy eating on a budget





\$ BUDGET TIP

Shop at stores that let you stack coupons. Or use more than one coupon for the same item. Two stores that do: Dollar General and BJ's Wholesale Club.

How to save on good-for-you groceries

You don't have to spend a fortune to eat well. A little planning and some supermarket smarts can go a long way. That's all it takes to fill your cart with healthy and budget-friendly food.

1. Think ahead

Kristi King is an RDN, a registered dietitian, at Texas Children's Hospital in Houston. She shared this advice: "When you plan your meals and shop with a list, you're much more likely to get items you need — and nothing more."

2. Head to the dollar store first

Make your local discount store your first stop. Doing so lets you cross a lot of items off your list for bargain prices. Look for staples like spices, coffee, oats and whole wheat bread. And avoid high-calorie snacks and sugary desserts. Some offer fresh produce too. So stock up on low-cost fruits and veggies if you can.

3. Buy fresh produce you'll (actually) use

Whole produce is usually cheaper than pre-washed and pre-cut options. Still, spending more can be worth it if you hate cutting and chopping. "If prep work keeps you from using up whole fruits and veggies before they go bad, then that's wasted money," says Jill Weisenberger, RD, author of *Prediabetes: A Complete Guide*.

4. Choose fruits at different stages of ripeness

How many times have you had a bunch of bananas turn brown and mushy all at once? To enjoy fruits all week long, buy a mix of ripe, unripe and in between.

5. Consider canned

“Canned veggies are picked and processed at their optimal nutrition status,” says King. Also, shelf-stable meats like canned tuna can be cheaper than fresh ones — and easier to prep. Look for “low sodium” or “no salt added” options.

6. Shop the freezers

Frozen foods like vegetables, fruits and fish are cheaper than fresh. And they have similar nutrient levels. Plus, fish servings come individually sealed, so you can pull out only what you need.

7. Look up and down

Items at eye level are often more expensive than those stocked higher or lower. Cheaper store-brand items are typically on the bottom shelves.

8. Second-guess sales

Limited-time and buy-one-get-one sales can make us buy things that are not on your list. Consider whether you’re going to use it, especially before it expires, says King.

9. Do a final check

“Before you step in the checkout line, review your cart,” says Weisenberger. Do you need every item? Will each one enhance your well-being and enjoyment? If not, put it back before you pay.

10. Change your mind? Take it back.

Many stores will fully refund you or offer store credit. Visit the store’s website to see its return policy before you make the trip.

BUDGET TIP

Buying in bulk can help you save over the long run if you use it all up. Stick to items that won’t go bad (canned goods, rice) and avoid fresh ones. “Before you step in the checkout line, review your cart,” says Weisenberger. Do you need every item? Will each one enhance your well-being and enjoyment? If not, put it back before you pay.



EAT SMART ON THE GO

We eat out more often in summer. But meals away from home are often higher in calories, sugar and unhealthy fats. Here’s how to eat healthy wherever you travel.

At a fast-food restaurant

- Order chicken or fish grilled, not fried. Fried foods are high in fat and sodium.
- Pick apple slices or yogurt as your side instead of french fries or onion rings.

At a fair or concession stand

- Look for satisfying, fiber-rich snacks like grilled corn, popcorn or peanuts.
- Avoid sugary beverages. Stay hydrated with water or unsweetened drinks instead.

At a cookout

- Fill half your plate with filling high-fiber sides like fruits and salad. Limit mayonnaise-based sides like potato salad to a spoonful, not a scoopful.
- Choose a single main dish — so a burger or a hot dog, not one of each.

At an ice cream shop

- Downsize to a child’s size.
- Top it off with fresh fruit, not fruit in syrup, which has a lot of added sugar.

5 ways to make fruits and vegetables even healthier

\$ BUDGET TIP

Americans throw out \$161 billion worth of food each year!* To keep your cash, freeze fruits and vegetables you can't eat before they go bad to enjoy later.

1

Eat it soon

"Produce starts to lose nutrients soon after it's harvested," says Jill Weisenberger, RD, of Yorktown, Virginia. Plan to eat fruits and vegetables within a week of buying them. Also, choose locally grown options when you can: The farther food travels, the more time there is for nutrients to get lost.

2

Put the peeler away

When you peel cucumbers, apples and pears, you throw away valuable nutrients. The skin on these fruits is chock-full of fiber, vitamins, minerals and more, says Weisenberger. Other summer produce with nutrient-rich peels includes eggplant, zucchini and summer squash.

3

Add healthy fats

Some vitamins and healthy compounds are fat-soluble. This means you absorb them better when you eat them with a little fat. Healthy fats from foods like olives, seeds and nuts also keep you fuller longer. Try adding chopped walnuts to your salad or dip apple slices in peanut butter.

4

Stay out of hot water

Ever notice that the water turns green when you boil broccoli? That's because the water-soluble vitamins and minerals in the broccoli seeped into the cooking water. To avoid pouring nutrients down the drain, skip boiling your veggies and steam, roast, stir-fry or grill them instead.

5

Play with heat

Heat has a different effect on different nutrients. When you cook cauliflower, for example, the heat makes certain anti-inflammatory compounds easier to absorb. Yet cooking lowers levels of heat-sensitive nutrients, like vitamin C. To maximize the perks of veggies, eat a mix of raw and cooked.

SAVE MONEY ON HEALTHY FOODS







If you're eligible for both Medicare and Medicaid, you may qualify for an Aetna® Dual-Eligible Special Needs Plan (D-SNP). D-SNP members get a monthly allowance to help pay for healthy foods.

Want to find out if you qualify for an Aetna D-SNP? Visit [AetnaMedicare.com/DSNPInfo](https://www.aetna.com/DSNPInfo) to learn more.

* FOR FOOD WASTE STATISTICS: U.S. Department of Agriculture. [Food Waste FAQs](#). Accessed May 3, 2024.

6 hydrating foods in season right now

Staying hydrated is vital for total-body health. And did you know we get about 20 percent of our water through food? Fortunately, summer fruits and veggies are high in water, and in-season produce is typically cheaper — two great reasons to stock up on these foods.

| PRODUCE | WATER CONTENT | BONUS BENEFITS |
|---|---------------|--|
|  | 95% | Tomatoes contain lutein and zeaxanthin. These are two compounds may help reduce the risk of chronic eye diseases. |
|  | 93% | These peppers get their red color from capsanthin, a red pigment. Capsanthin has anti-cancer properties. |
|  | 93% | Spinach is full of minerals like iron and calcium, as well as vitamin K. These may be important for maintaining a healthy heart. |
|  | 92% | Lycopene is the compound that makes watermelon red. It may help lower blood pressure, and offer a bit of sunburn protection too. |
|  | 87% | One large orange contains more than a full day's supply of vitamin C. Vitamin C is vital for healthy immune system function. |
|  | 86% | A cup of raspberries has nearly 10 grams of fiber. Eating more fiber helps you maintain a healthy weight and keeps you regular. |



5 SUBTLE SIGNS YOU'RE DEHYDRATED

Dehydration isn't always obvious. Feeling thirsty is a sign most of us recognize. Here are five other red flags to watch for:

- 1 Dry mouth, lips and eyes
- 2 Dizziness
- 3 Tiredness with no clear reason for it
- 4 Dark yellow urine (it should look like diluted lemonade)
- 5 Fewer restroom breaks than usual



No-cook summer supper

No one wants to be near a hot stove during the dog days of summer. Fortunately, you don't have to be. Check out this no-cook dinner, made with low-cost ingredients. With it, you can dig in to a healthy, homemade meal without breaking a sweat.

Chicken-almond salad sandwich

Made with slivered almonds, juicy grapes and a splash of vinegar, this is a fresh spin on classic chicken salad. Swapping in light Greek yogurt for mayo keeps it creamy and light while adding protein.

SERVES: 4

PREP TIME: 15 minutes

TOTAL TIME: 15 minutes

- 2 8-oz. cans chunk chicken breast in water
- 1 cup low-fat Greek yogurt
- 2 tsp. vegetable oil or olive oil
- 1 tsp. vinegar
- 1 cup grapes, halved
- ¼ cup sliced almonds
- ½ tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. black pepper
- 2 tsp. mustard, divided
- 8 slices whole-wheat bread
- 8 large pieces lettuce
- 1 small tomato, sliced

Drain and rinse chicken to remove excess sodium. In a large mixing bowl, stir together the yogurt, oil and vinegar. Add the chicken, grapes, almonds, salt and pepper. Stir gently to mix. Spread ½ tsp. mustard on each of 4 slices of bread; top each with 2 lettuce leaves, tomato slices and chicken salad. Top with the remaining 4 bread slices and enjoy.

NUTRITION INFO

PER SERVING:

441 calories, 40 g protein, 35 g carbs, 6 g fiber, 15 g fat (2 g saturated), 12 g sugar, 471 mg sodium



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To learn more about Aetna D-SNPs, visit [AetnaMedicare.com/DSNPInfo](https://www.aetna.com/DSNPInfo)

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