



Kinship Link

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Eating Right on a Budget

Pro Kinship for Kids

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Getting the most nutrition for your food budget starts with a little extra planning before you shop. There are many ways to save money on the foods that you eat. Here are some budget-friendly tips for eating right.

Cook More, Eat Out Less

Eating out can be expensive. Many foods can be prepared for less money and more healthfully at home. Pre-packaged foods, like frozen dinners and packaged pasta or rice mixes can also add up when you calculate the cost per serving. Find a few simple, healthy recipes your family enjoys and save eating out for special occasions.

Plan What You are Going To Eat

Deciding on meals and snacks before you shop can save both time and money. Review recipes and make a grocery list of what ingredients are needed, then check to see what foods you already have and make a list for what you still need to buy. When shopping with a list you will be less likely to buy things that are not on it.

Decide How Much to Make or Buy

Making a large batch by

doubling a recipe will save time in the kitchen later on. Extra portions can be used for lunches or meals later in the week, or frozen as leftovers in individual containers for future use. Purchasing ingredients in bulk is also often cheaper.

Determine Where to Shop

Check the local newspaper and online or at the store for sales and coupons, especially when it come to more expensive ingredients, such as meat and seafood. While at the store, compare prices of different brands and different sizes of the same brand to see which has a lower unit price. The unit price is the price per ounce or pint.

Shop for Foods that are in Season

Fresh fruits and vegetables that are in season are usually easier to get and may be less expensive. Frozen and canned produce are also good options and may be more affordable at certain times of the year. Look for fruit that is canned in 100% juice or water and canned vegetables that are labeled "low in sodium" or "no salt added".

Watch Portion Sizes

Eating too much of even lower cost foods and beverages can add up to extra dollars and calories. Use smaller plates, bowls, and glasses to help keep portions under control. Fill half your plate with fruits and vegetables and the other half with grains and protein foods such as lean meat, poultry, seafood, or beans. This is an easy way to eat a balanced meal while controlling portions and cost. To complete the meal, add a glass of fat-free or low-fat milk, cheese, or yogurt.

Focus on Nutritious, Low-Cost Foods

Certain foods tend to be less expensive than others. Make the most of your food dollars by finding recipes that use the following ingredients: beans, peas, lentils, sweet or white potatoes, eggs, peanut butter, canned salmon, tuna, or crabmeat, grains such as oats, brown rice, barley, or quinoa, and frozen or canned fruits and vegetables.

Make Your Own Healthy Snacks

Convenience costs money. Many snacks, even healthy ones, usually cost more when sold individually. Make your own snacks by

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purchasing large tubs of low-fat yogurt or cottage cheese and dividing them into smaller containers. For trail mix, combine unsalted nuts, dried fruits, and whole grain pretzels or cereal. Store small portions in airtight containers. Air-popped popcorn and whole fresh fruits in season also tend to cost less compared to pre-packaged items.

Start a Garden or Visit a Farmers Market or Orchard

A garden can be a lot of fun, especially for kids. It's also an affordable way to

eat more fruits and vegetables. You can even grow a garden in pots in your house to enjoy fresh produce in the middle of the winter. Plants can be started from seed or purchased at a low price. Another way to increase your family's variety of produce is to visit a farmers market or orchard. Locally grown fruits and vegetables are often available for less money than at the grocery store. Check and see where the closest farmers market or orchard is in your area.

Quench Your Thirst with Water

Water from the tap is a low cost way to stay hydrated. Substituting plain water in place of sweetened beverages not only saves you money, but may also help you reduce extra calories from added sugars.



Smart Tips for Reading Menus

Ordering out may be a treat after a busy week or a fun way to mark a celebration. However, making the right choices when eating out can also be a challenge. Here are a few tips to keep in mind to help you decipher the menu the next time you order out.

Nutrition Information

Many restaurants, bakeries, coffee shops, and quick service vendors are required to provide nutrition information about their foods and beverages right on the menu.

Calories

The amount of calories for foods that are regularly offered should be listed next to items on menus, order boards, or next to the food being served on buffet lines.

Salt, Fat, Carbohydrates, and More

The information posted on the menu is usually limited to calories, but sometimes a restaurant may list other nutrients to show that the food is low in fat or high in protein. Additional nutrition information must also be available on request for most foods served at these restaurants. This includes information about the amount of nutrients, such as sodium, saturated fat, and dietary fiber is in the foods.

Make the Right Choices for You

Nutrition needs vary from person to person. Choose the foods that fit your health needs, eating style and preferences. These tips may be helpful when trying to make the best choices for you and your family:

- * Consider the calorie information when deciding between different dishes and what to order.
- * Remember that side dishes add calories too; consider steamed vegetables or fruit as an option, when available.
- * Save half your meal for later or ask for a dessert to be split for a more appropriate portion size when servings are large or high in calories.
- * Rethink your drink. Calories from beverages can add up quickly, especially if there are free refills. Choose healthier options like water or low-fat or fat-free milk or drinks that are calorie-free, such as unsweetened coffee or tea.
- * Ask for sauces and dressing on the side to help control how much actually goes on your food.

Find Your Healthy Eating Routine

Everyone has their own, individual nutrition needs. Find your healthy eating routine. Choose foods and beverages with less saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars. Focus on

variety, amount, and nutrition when choosing what to eat and drink. Start with small changes to build your healthy eating routine now and into the future.

Have a Backup Plan

Now that you are set to have your healthy eating routine, make sure to have a backup plan when needed. Restaurants aren't required to have nutrition information available if they have fewer than 20 locations. There are also a few exceptions for items such as daily specials, custom orders, or condiments.

If nutrition information isn't available for an item, consider the following tips when you are deciding what to order.

Limit items that are fried or served in sauces that are high in calories and saturated fat. Some terms to be mindful of include:

- Crunchy, Crispy, Battered, and Breaded
- Creamy, Cheesy, Alfredo

Items that are often lower in calories and may be more healthful options include terms, such as:

- Baked, Grilled, Roasted, Steamed
- Al Fresco, Marinara

