



# Healthy Eating on a Budget

Eating healthy on a budget is possible! The U.S.D.A. Economic Research Service studied the prices of produce in 2008. They found that a person consuming 2,000 calories per day can meet their dietary recommendations of fruit and vegetables for under \$2.50 a day!

**Buy in Season:** When produce is in season locally, the greater abundance of the crop usually makes it less expensive. The less distance that the food has to travel, the less cost is incurred keeping prices low. Also, produce is at its peak nutritional value when its ripe. To find what produce is in season go to <http://www.nrdc.org/health/foodmiles/> (National Resources Defense Council) and select your state and season!

**Eat Beans:** Beans are inexpensive, a great source of protein and fiber. You can add beans to soups, chili, taco meat, salads, and other dishes to increase bulk.

**Frozen Produce:** When you purchase frozen produce—fruits or veggies—you don't have to worry about it spoiling. From a nutritional standpoint, frozen produce can be more nutritious than fresh produce since the products are often flash-frozen after picking and are not degrading on store shelves.

**Choose Store Brands:** Store brands are nutritionally equivalent to name brand items and typically cost less.

**Bulk it up/Stock the Staples:** Buying large packages of meat and frozen produce reduces the per unit cost. Then you can repackage and freeze items in serving size portions to make it last longer. The same principle goes for large packages of snacks, like pretzels, buying them in bulk and repackaging them in serving sizes will save on cost. Keeping bulk items like beans, brown rice, and pasta in the pantry allows you to add them to your meals to help bulk up dishes like soups, stews, and casseroles while increasing fiber!

**Keep it Whole:** Buying the whole chicken and dividing it up is more economical than buying separate breasts or thighs. You can cut the chicken up into servings and refrigerate or freeze the remaining for leftovers or you can use the trimmings to make a nutrient-rich broth.

**Plan Ahead:** Before you start filling up your cart take an inventory of what you have at home and what you need for the upcoming week's meals. Visit your grocery store's website to check for sales and try to plan your menu for the week around the deals. Once you get to the store make sure you stick to your list to avoid impulse purchases which can add up at the check out.

**Shop the Perimeter:** The sections on the perimeter of the store are the most nutritious! Fruits, vegetables, lean meats, fish, low-fat dairy, and some of your whole grains are all found on the outer walls of the store. Try and stay out of those inner aisles to avoid processed, energy-dense foods.

Learn more @ [www.NorthernVirginiaHealthyKids.org](http://www.NorthernVirginiaHealthyKids.org)