

Eating Healthy on a Budget

Tips for eating healthy on a budget

1. Plan your meals and snacks.
2. Stick to your grocery list.
3. Cook most of your meals at home.
4. Cook once, eat twice.
5. Buy whole, fresh fruits and vegetables. Pre-cut produce is much higher in cost. For example, a yellow onion that costs \$1.08/pound can cost \$5.76/pound pre-diced.
6. Limit buying foods low in nutrients, like sugary drinks, snack crackers, chips, and cookies.
7. Buy generic brands.
8. Buy expensive items when they are on sale or look for coupons.
9. Get a grocery store loyalty card.
10. Use beans and grains to “extend” meat in recipes.
11. Buy fresh fruits and vegetables in season when they cost less. If you buy too much, freeze the extra.
12. Buy frozen fruits and vegetables when they are out of season. Buy in bulk when they are on sale.
13. Pack your lunch and snacks.
14. Grow some food at home. For small spaces, grow foods in containers or vertical gardens.



Resources to learn more

- **To learn how to freeze fruits,** read “Food Preservation: Freezing Fruits” at ohioline.osu.edu/factsheet/HYG-5349 by Ohio State University Extension. 
- **To learn how to grow food at home,** read “Vegetable Gardening for Beginners: The Complete Guide” at almanac.com/vegetable-gardening-for-beginners and “Vegetable Container Gardening for Beginners” at almanac.com/content/container-gardening-vegetables by Old Farmer’s Almanac. Try these easy to grow foods: sprouts, greens, herbs, tomatoes, onions, carrots, and beets. 
- **To learn how to read food labels,** read “Making Sense Out of Food Labels” at go.osu.edu/pted1173 by Ohio State Wexner Medical Center.
- **To learn when to buy organic,** read, “Which Food to Buy Organic (and How to Spend Less When You Do)” at go.osu.edu/organic-foods by Consumer Reports.

Let's look closer at some of these tips

Plan Your Meals

- **Make a chart like the one below to plan your meals for the week.** Start with an idea for a lean protein or think of a theme, like Taco Tuesday. Add healthy sides later, like whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and dairy products. To learn more about meal planning, read the “Meal Planning Book” at go.osu.edu/pted5168.
- **For healthier meals and to save money, limit eating out.** On days when family members have events, cook the meal ahead and reheat, eat leftovers, or prepare a meal from leftover proteins or vegetables from earlier in the week (cook once, eat twice), such as making rice bowls.
- **Sample meal plan:**

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Breakfast		Oats made with milk	Eggs	Recipe: high protein cereal bar	Eggs	Oats made with milk	Whole grain pancakes
Lunch	Brunch or nice family meal	Peanut butter and jelly sandwich	Ham and cheese sandwich	Cook once, eat twice: nachos or quesadillas made from Monday's beans or Tuesday's taco meat	Leftovers	Tuna	Cook once, eat twice: chicken salad made from Thursday's chicken
Dinner	Simple pantry or freezer meal	Theme: Meatless Monday (beans)	Theme: Taco Tuesday	Baked potato or pasta bar	Chicken	Fish	Theme: Movie Night (pizza)
Snack	Dried fruits and nuts	Hummus with vegetables and crackers	Recipe: “nice” cream	Cheese and crackers	Banana with peanut butter	Recipe: 2 energy balls	Popcorn



Make Your Grocery List

Use your meal plan to make a grocery list.

- **Organize your list by grocery store sections** (produce, deli, baked goods, meat, dry, frozen, dairy, etc.) to make trips to the grocery store quick and easy.
- **Look for sales, coupons, and rewards** from using the store's loyalty card.
- **Check that you have included all 5 food groups on your grocery list:** whole grains, fruits, vegetables, proteins (meat/beans), and dairy products.
- **When buying beverages:**
 - Save money by only buying the essentials – water and milk. If you do not like your tap water, buy a water filter. This is cheaper than buying bottled water and better for the environment.
 - Avoid buying sports drinks or electrolyte replacements unless you do intense sports or need them for a medical condition. Energy and vitamin drinks are not a good source of fluids and nutrients. Save your money and leave these on the shelf.

Healthy, budget friendly recipes

Quick Burritos (4 servings)

Ingredients:

1 package instant brown rice	½ teaspoon salt
5 fresh tomatoes, or 1, 14-ounce can, no salt added tomatoes	1 can refried beans
½ teaspoon garlic powder	4 whole wheat flour tortillas
1 teaspoon cumin	½ cup reduced fat shredded cheese

Directions:

1. Follow the instructions on the box for how to cook the brown rice.
2. Add in the tomatoes while cooking, as well as ½ teaspoon garlic powder, 1 teaspoon cumin, and ½ teaspoon salt.
3. Heat the refried beans on the stove or in the microwave.
4. To prepare a burrito, put ⅓ cup beans, ½ cup rice mixture, and 2 tablespoons cheese in each tortilla.
5. This meal contains 4 of the 5 food groups. Add fruit on the side for a 5th food group!

Pasta with Broccoli and White Beans (4 servings)

Ingredients:

- 1, 12-ounce box (about 340.19 g) whole wheat pasta, any shape (such as penne, spirals, shells)
- 1, 15.5-ounce can, no salt added, white beans (such as cannellini, great northern, or navy beans), drained and rinsed
- 2 to 3 cups fresh or frozen broccoli, chopped and thawed (you can use spinach instead)
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder and/or onion powder
- Parmesan cheese (optional)

Directions:

1. Follow the instructions on the box for how to cook the noodles. When there are 5 minutes left on the timer, go to step 2.
2. Add thawed broccoli and white beans. Continue cooking for 5 minutes until the pasta is done.
3. Drain the cooking water, and return pasta, broccoli, and beans to the cooking pot.
4. Stir in 1 tablespoon olive oil, garlic powder, onion powder, and Parmesan to coat.
5. Divide among 4 plates, and season with salt and pepper.
6. Add a piece of fruit and a glass of milk to have a meal with all 5 food groups.

Tortilla Pizza (1 serving)**Ingredients:**

1 whole wheat flour tortilla

¼ cup low sodium pizza sauce

¼ cup reduced fat mozzarella cheese

1 to 2 cups pizza toppings, such as tomatoes, skinless grilled chicken, green peppers, onion, and mushrooms

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
2. Put pizza sauce, toppings, and cheese on flour tortilla.
3. Bake in oven for 10 to 15 minutes.
4. Add a side salad with vinegar and oil dressing and a piece of fruit for dessert to have a meal with 4 of the 5 food groups.

Cook Once, Eat Twice Recipes**Dish 1: Lime Chicken and Roasted Vegetables (4 servings)****Ingredients:**

2 pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts cut in half horizontally to make thin cutlets

¼ cup lime juice (1 lime juiced or ¼ cup bottled lime juice)

2½ teaspoons ground cumin

4 teaspoons bottled garlic or 4 garlic cloves, minced

6 tablespoons olive oil

1, 16-ounce bag of frozen mixed vegetables (cauliflower, broccoli, carrots)

1 teaspoon salt

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
2. Line 2 baking sheets with aluminum foil.
3. Place the chicken in a large bowl. Add lime juice, 4 tablespoons olive oil, 2 teaspoons cumin, and ½ teaspoon salt. Toss to combine and coat the chicken well. Set aside.
4. On 1 sheet, dump out the whole bag of frozen vegetables, add 2 tablespoons olive oil, ½ teaspoon cumin, and ½ teaspoon salt. Toss to coat.
5. On the other sheet, place the chicken breasts.
6. Once the oven is preheated, place both pans in the oven.
7. Cook the chicken and vegetables for 10 minutes, and then flip the chicken over and stir the vegetables. Cook for 15 minutes more. Cook the chicken until it is no longer pink inside.
8. Set aside half of the chicken and roasted vegetables for tomorrow's recipe (Dish 2). Wrap and refrigerate once cooled.
9. Divide the rest of the chicken and vegetables between 4 plates. Add fruit salad on the side and a whole wheat roll or slice of bread to round out the meal.

Cook Once, Eat Twice Recipes**Dish 2: Chicken and Black Bean Soup with Roasted Vegetables
(4 servings)****Ingredients:**

Leftover chicken from Lime Chicken

1 quart low sodium vegetable or chicken broth

1 can low sodium black beans, drained and rinsed

1 can no salt added diced tomatoes

Optional toppings: tortilla chips, avocado, sour cream, fresh cilantro

Directions:

1. Chop leftover chicken into bite-sized pieces.
2. Place all ingredients (except toppings) in a large pot and reheat by bringing to a simmer on the stove top (medium heat).
3. Divide between 4 bowls with optional toppings, if desired. Add a side of fruit to finish the meal.

“Nice” Cream (2 servings)

Ingredients:

1 frozen banana
2 tablespoons peanut butter
1 tablespoon honey (optional)
½ teaspoon vanilla (optional)
1 tablespoon cocoa (optional)

Directions:

1. Combine all ingredients in a blender or food processor. Blend until smooth like soft serve.
2. Divide between 2 bowls.

Protein Balls (10 to 12 balls)

Ingredients:

⅔ cup old fashioned oats
¼ cup unsweetened shredded coconut
¼ cup ground almonds (or any nuts of choice)
¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
Pinch of kosher salt
⅓ cup natural peanut butter (no sugar)
2 tablespoons honey
¼ teaspoon vanilla (optional)
2 tablespoons mini chocolate chips (optional)
2 tablespoons milk

Directions:

1. Mix all ingredients.
2. Shape into 10 to 12 tablespoon sized balls or flatten into squares.
3. Serve with a glass of milk.

Breakfast Cereal Bars (12 servings)

Ingredients:

2 cups cereal, such as flakes, Chex, or Cheerios
6 tablespoons peanut butter (or sunflower seed or nut butter)
2 tablespoons honey or maple syrup

Directions:

1. Line a baking pan with foil or plastic wrap. Set aside.
2. In a large mixing bowl, combine cereal, nut butter, and honey or maple syrup.
3. Press into lined pan.
4. Refrigerate for 30 minutes.
5. Cut into 12 bars.
6. Serve with a glass of milk.

This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk to your healthcare provider if you have any questions about your care.