Healthy Eating for College Students on a Budget

Times are tough and money can be tight, especially for the starving college students. This website is intended to help you maintain a healthy diet without breaking the bank and is relevant to college students or anyone on a budget.
Healthy Eating Basics

Grains:
- Foods in the grain group include bread, pasta, oatmeal, breakfast cereals, and tortillas
- Make half of your grains whole—check the label for ‘whole grain’
- Whole grains contain fiber which may help reduce blood cholesterol levels and lower the risk of heart disease
- Fiber also helps you feel full with fewer calories and is important for bowel function

Vegetables:
- Vegetables are rich in vitamins and minerals and low in calories—making them a great choice for a healthy diet
- Vegetables are also high in fiber
- Make half of your plate fruits and vegetables
- Vegetables are bright and colorful and make any plate look more appetizing

Fruits:
- Fruits are great sources of potassium, fiber, vitamin C and folate.
- Fruits like with a skin like oranges, apples, bananas, and pears are easy to transport and great to pack as a snack.
- Make half of your plate fruits and vegetables
- Fruit makes a great low calorie alternative to many desserts
- Choose whole fruits over fruit juice and when choosing juice, make it 100% juice to avoid added sugar
Dairy:
- The dairy group includes foods made from milk that retain their calcium content, like cheese, yogurt, and ice cream
- Calcium-fortified beverages like soy, almond, and rice milk also count
- Choose low-fat or fat free dairy products
- Dairy products are rich in calcium and fortified with vitamin D which are important for bone health especially in children

Protein:
- Foods in the protein group include not only meats, poultry, and seafood but eggs, beans, peas, nuts, seeds and processed soy products like tofu.
- Choose lean cuts of meat to reduce saturated fat and cholesterol intake
- Nuts, peas, and beans are great sources of fiber
- Seafood is a great source of omega-3 fatty acids which are important for the prevention of heart disease

Visit www.choosemyplate.gov for more information on healthy eating and suggested serving sizes
Meal Planning

The first step to eating on a budget is planning. Meal planning can help you make a list to use as a road map at the grocery store and get everything you need for all of your meals. It also helps avoid that feeling of ‘I have all of this food, but don't know how to make a meal out of it’.

*It may be helpful to devise a meal planning tool or use the one found here: http://www.extension.iastate.edu/efnep/web/fivedayplanningworksheet.pdf

Simple steps to meal planning*:

1. Look in your cupboards, refrigerator, and freezer to see what you already have.
2. Think of ways you could use these items for meals throughout the week.
3. You may need items to go with those that you already have in order to make a meal, put these on your grocery list.
4. Look through your grocery store’s weekly ad (you can often find them online) and circle the specials that you can incorporate into your meal plan. Put these on your list too.
5. Look back over your meal plan for the week, check to see if you are incorporating all of the food groups in most of your meals.
Making your list

Making a grocery list helps you stay on task while grocery shopping and avoid impulse buys. Always make a list and stick to it at the store!

- Using your meal planning tool, make sure you add all ingredients from planned meal recipes to your list. Be familiar with what you already have at home so you don’t overbuy.

- Make sure to browse ads for sales and check for coupons.

- Organizing your list is very useful for saving time at the grocery store. You can organize by store layout or food category to help you get to the check out quick. Sometimes making a template can be a great solution for well thought-out lists.

- Sometimes it’s helpful to keep a running list posted on the refrigerator. This way, necessary items, like milk and bread, are added to the list as they run out and won’t be forgotten at the next trip.

Stop by the Healthy Eating Tip of the Month bulletin board to pick up a sample Grocery shopping template and healthy shopping tool!
Now that you have your list, you are ready to hit the store. Here are some more tips that will help you save at the grocery store.

**Shopping tips**

*Have a snack first.* Shopping while hungry will make you more prone to impulse buys.

*Look for unit prices.* Some stores have unit pricing listed on the shelves. Look here to find the best deal between package sizes and brands.

*Don’t shop in a hurry.* Give yourself time to read labels and compare prices to get the best deals.

*Don’t be tempted by amazing sales or coupons.* Stick to the list, avoid buying sale items just because they are a good deal. If you aren’t going to eat it, it’s a waste of money. Same goes for sales on junk food.

*Shop for less, more often.* It is easier to do more small shopping trips than one huge one every once in a while, your food will be fresher too.
Best Buys for Cost and Nutrition

Fruits
- Buy fresh fruits in season for the best savings.
- Choose canned fruit in light syrup or natural juices all year long.

Meat and Beans
- Dried beans are a great source of protein and are much cheaper plus last longer than meat.
- There are often good deals on ‘family size’ portions. Portion at home and freeze for later.

Vegetables
- Avoid bagged salads and pre-cut vegetables. Save money by buying whole and putting in the prep work to wash and cut them yourself at home.
- Frozen vegetables are just as nutritious as fresh vegetables but at a lower cost.

Breads and Grains
- Choose regular rice and oatmeal instead of instant to save money and reduce sodium, sugar, and calories.
- You can often find day old bread for a great price reduction.

Dairy
- Buy low-fat milk, yogurt, and cheese in the largest size that you will be able to consume before spoilage. Individual containers of milk or yogurt and shredded or pre-cut cheese add price.
Caution! While coupons can be a great way to save money, make sure that the deal you are getting with the coupon is the best deal. A store brand might still be cheaper without a coupon so make sure to compare prices! Also, coupons are often for highly processed foods which we know add cost and are often unhealthy. Think about it, how often do you see coupons for apples or milk?

Label reading

Make use of the nutrition facts label when shopping. Compare between brands to get the best nutrition for the best value. Look for foods with lower fat, cholesterol and sodium and pick nutritious foods with high fiber content.
Reduce food waste

Food wasted is money down the drain. Try these tips to make the most out of your groceries.

- Use see through storage containers for your leftovers so you easily know what it is.
- If leftovers are consistently not being eaten, try making smaller recipe sizes.
- It may be helpful to post a leftovers or ‘to use up’ list on your fridge to remind everyone of what is available that needs to be eaten.
- Check supplies before going to the store so not to overbuy.
- Store foods properly so that they maintain freshness the longest.
- Wash and cut fresh fruits and vegetables right after returning from the grocery store to make them readily available for eating.

The average American family throws away 14 percent of their food at home, according to a USDA funded study in 2004. That's almost $600 every year.
It can be tempting to think that with deals like ‘dollar menus’ and $5 meals that fast food restaurants are budget friendly.

However, eating out frequently is not only a stressor on the budget but these fast-foods/convenience foods are often high-calorie, high sodium, and high fat.

Getting a $5 deal for lunch during the week adds up quickly, that’s $25 out of your food budget.

Think about the savings if you packed a lunch. Bringing leftovers or a sandwich, some fruits and vegetables, and a granola bar or other snack might cost you as little as $5 for the week! Plus, you can make much healthier choices from home.

Article on the cost of convenience/fast foods versus healthy foods:
Bean and Rice Burrito
Serving Size: 1 burrito
Yield: 8 servings

Ingredients:
2 cups cooked rice
1 small chopped onion
2 cups cooked kidney beans or one 15 ounce can, drained
8 (10 inch) flour tortillas
1/2 cup salsa
1/2 cup grated cheese

Instructions:
1. Preheat the oven to 300 degrees.
2. Peel the onion, and chop it into small pieces.
3. Drain the liquid from the cooked (or canned) kidney beans.
4. Mix the rice, chopped onion, and beans in a bowl.
5. Put each tortilla on a flat surface.
6. Put 1/2 cup of the rice and bean mix in the middle of each tortilla.
7. Fold the sides of the tortilla to hold the rice and beans.
8. Put each filled tortilla (burrito) in the baking pan.
10. While the burritos are baking, grate 1/2 cup cheese.
11. Pour the salsa over the baked burritos. Add cheese.
12. Serve the burritos warm.

Cost:
Per Recipe: $ 3.02
Per Serving: $ 0.38

Source:
Adapted from:
Pennsylvania Nutrition Education Network
Website Recipes
The Pennsylvania Nutrition Education Program
Author:
Pennsylvania Nutrition Education Program
Recipes

Frozen Fruit Cups

Serving Size: 1/18 of recipe
Yield: 18 servings

Ingredients:
3 bananas, mashed
24 ounces yogurt, non-fat strawberry flavored (or plain)
10 ounces strawberries, frozen, thawed, undrained
1 can (8 ounces) crushed pineapple, undrained

Preparation:
1. Line muffin tin(s) cups with paper baking cups (18 total).
2. In a large mixing bowl, add mashed bananas, yogurt, strawberries, and pineapple.
3. Spoon into muffin tin and freeze at least 3 hours or until firm.
4. Remove frozen cups and store in a plastic bag in the freezer.
5. Before serving, remove paper cups.

Source: SNAP-Ed Connection

Find more budget friendly recipes at
http://recipefinder.nal.usda.gov/
What’s in the News?

Sugar Tax
Americans are eating way too much added sugar. Massachusetts currently has a tax proposal to extend the state’s 6.5% tax to include sugary foods like soda, candy, and other sugary drinks.


Walmart’s New Health Focus
The chain known for the best bargain is now trying to provide for the health conscious as well. Walmart will introduce the new ‘Great for You’ labeling on their store brand products to indicate healthy choices. The store is also working with suppliers to reduce sodium, added sugar, and trans fats in many of their products.

Win a Prize!

Stop by the Healthy Eating Tip of the Month bulletin board in the UH cafeteria to sign up to win this 14-piece Pyrex glass storage set!

Perfect for packing a lunch for work. Packing your lunch is a great way to eat healthier and save money at the same time. These glass containers are ideal for reheating leftovers as a cost-effective alternative to buying lunch at work or school.

While you are signing up, check out the bulletin board for more tips, handouts and brochures to help you start eating healthy on a budget!

This Pyrex 14-Piece Storage Plus Set includes:

- Two 2-cup round bowls
- One 4-cup round bowl
- One 1-cup round bowl
- One 3-cup rectangle storage
- One 6-cup rectangle storage
- One 7-cup round bowl

All with red BPA-free, scratch-resistant covers.
Visit these websites for even more helpful information

Spend Smart Eat Smart:
http://www.extension.iastate.edu/foodsavings/

USDA Choose My Plate:
http://www.choosemyplate.gov/healthy-eating-on-budget.html

Nutrition.gov Shopping, Cooking, and Meal Planning:
http://www.nutrition.gov/nal_display/index.php?info_center=11&tax_level=3&tax_subject=391&topic_id=1756&level3_id=6194&level4_id=0&level5_id=0&placement_default=0

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, We Can! Program:

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics:
http://www.eatright.org/
For more information, contact:

Patient Food and Nutrition Services
Nutrition Counseling Center
UH Room # 2A-237 (second floor)
1500 E. Medical Center Drive
Ann Arbor, MI 48109
(734-936-7527)