

# Healthy Eating Tip of the Month

The topic for December is **healthy eating on a budget!** Given the current economic situation it is increasingly important for families to know how to stretch their dollar in order to provide the best nutrition for themselves and family. This topic encompasses brief guidelines on healthy eating as well as tips and recommendations for how to save money while making smart decisions regarding food.



**Healthy food can be easy, delicious and affordable!**

## Literature

Good nutrition is necessary for healthy lives. Consuming fruits and vegetables is one of the most important aspects of a healthy diet. It has been found that Americans are increasingly not getting enough fruits and vegetables in their diets, with only 40% meeting the recommendations of 5 cups/day (1,2). This can be the result of fruits and vegetables not being accessible, but also of perceptions that they are unaffordable. Income has been found to be a determinant of fruit and vegetable consumption (5). Financial status should not be a barrier to getting a well balanced and nutritious diet. Based on a study conducted through the USDA, getting 3 servings of fruit a day (~2 cups) can cost as little as \$0.37 (4). Getting vegetables is even less at \$0.27/day for four servings (~2 cups). This leaves the bulk of one's daily food allowance (~85% on average) to be spent on the other three food groups of meat/protein, dairy and

grains. Not only are fruits and vegetables affordable, but for the nutrients they provide, they are a great deal! Below is a table that indicates the form of different fruits and vegetables that is the most affordable (4).

## Least expensive way to eat fruits and veggies



Fresh: apples, peaches, pears, plums, blueberries, strawberries, cherries, cabbage, potatoes, broccoli, carrots, cauliflower, kale, sweet potatoes, spinach, squash/zucchini, mangoes, papayas, bananas

Frozen: raspberries, collard greens, turnip greens, okra

Canned: green beans, tomatoes, sweet corn, green peas, asparagus

Dried: grapes (raisins), apricots

Juice: grapefruit (frozen), orange (frozen), pineapple, prune (plums), tomato

Cost, convenience and taste are important determinants in predicting healthy eating behaviors (1). Unfortunately, convenience stores often have limited choices and higher prices, further biasing consumers ability to procure healthy foods. Taste also proves to be a barrier, as some people do not know how to prepare vegetables properly or believe them to not taste good. However, these problems can be overcome with education, experience, strategy and public policy. Read on more to learn tips about how you can overcome some of these barriers to attaining a healthier diet.

### References

1. Cassady D, Jetter KM, Culp J. Is Price a Barrier to Eating More Fruits and Vegetables for Low-Income Families? *J Am Diet Assoc.* 2007; 107:1909-1915.
2. Glanz K, Yaroch AL. Strategies for increasing fruit and vegetable intake in grocery stores and communities; policy, pricing, and environmental change. *Preventative Medicine.* 2004; 39:S75-S80.

3. The Center for Disease Control.

[http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov/downloads/eat\\_more\\_fv\\_text.pdf](http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov/downloads/eat_more_fv_text.pdf)

4. Reed J, Frazao E, Itskowitz R. How Much Do Americans Pay for Fruits and Vegetables? Agriculture Information Bulletin No. (AIB790) 39 2004.

5. Biing-Hwan Lin. Fruit and Vegetable Consumption: Looking Ahead to 2020. Agriculture Information Bulletin No. (AIB792-7) 2004.

## General Information

### A Healthy Diet

Eating a healthful diet involves eating the right foods while limiting the wrong foods, and not continuously taking in more calories than your body requires. Below are some tips as recommended by the United States Department of Agriculture. Make sure to eat a variety of foods from all 5 food groups. Recommended servings below are for a 2000 calorie diet, but you can find your own energy requirements and recommendations at: [www.MyPyramid.gov](http://www.MyPyramid.gov).

#### -Vary your veggies



It is not only important to eat a recommended 2.5 cups of vegetables a day, but also to get a variety of vegetables. Go by the color; aim for a range of vegetables that are vibrant in color, such as dark greens, bright oranges and reds. This indicates a higher nutrient level than starchy vegetables, such as potatoes.



#### -Focus on fruit

For a 2000 calorie diet, it is recommended to eat 2 cups of fruit a day. Aim to eat a variety of fruits and choose fresh, frozen and canned fruits over fruit juices. Whole fruits contain more nutrients and fiber compared to sugar levels than juices do.



### -Make half your grains whole

Out of the recommended 6 oz. of grains a day (approximately 6 slices of bread's worth); try to make half of them a whole grain source. This can be accomplished with a number of foods such as oatmeal, whole grain pasta or crackers.



### -Get your calcium-rich foods

As the Healthy Eating Tip of the Month from November emphasized, calcium-rich foods are important for healthy bones. Aim to eat or drink 3 cups of dairy from low-fat sources, such as yogurt and reduced fat milks.



### -Go lean with protein

Choose lower fat options for protein, including nuts and beans as well as fish and low fat poultry. It is important to eat a variety as different protein sources provide different nutrients to maximize health.

### -In addition:

Avoid trans fats and limit your saturated fats, cholesterol and sodium. Particularly trans fats have a negative affect upon cholesterol levels and can make one more susceptible to cardiovascular problems.

\*for more information see [www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov)

## Planning

Key to saving money on food is having a [plan](#). Decide what to eat that week and make a list. Know what you need at the store and what you already have at home. The list should have specific items and quantities so that only the necessary purchases will be made and extra food will not be purchased and then wasted.

An important goal for Americans is to increase their consumption of fruits and vegetables. Try to incorporate more in your meal planning for every day!

## Smart Shopping

-Select your store wisely. Avoid convenience stores that are usually more expensive. Pick a grocery store, such as a large supermarket, with lower prices and only go to one store so that you don't waste expensive gasoline.

-Compare prices. Often stores will post the cost/oz. for each item to help the shopper make the best decision.

-Buy generic brands-these foods often taste the same without the same high price tag.

-Buy produce in season. Fruits and vegetables that are in season not only cost less but taste better too.

-Frozen and canned fruits and vegetables are a cost efficient way to get more in your diet.

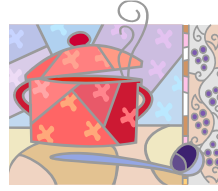
-Only buy sale/bulk foods if they are ones you will use. Saving money on a food item that you won't use is actually wasting money.

-Eat before you shop. Shopping on an empty stomach leads to impulse buys.

-Aim to drink more tap water. Of all purchases at groceries stores, the second most money goes towards purchasing beverages. But if you do buy beverages, purchase the larger sizes that are less per ounce.

-Buying bulk can be a good value, but make sure you don't waste any food. Portion meat out and freeze separately or have a plan for using all of the food.

-Use beans. They are not only inexpensive, but a great source of protein too!



## Cooking

If you have time, making food from scratch is much less expensive than buying convenience items or processed foods.

-Bring your own lunch. This is a great way to make sure leftovers are not wasted and avoid paying a lot for a meal out.

-Make your own snacks. Portioning your own is less expensive than buying single serving packets.

-Waste not want not. Make use of all the food you buy. If you are not sure how to, search online using the ingredients you have for a recipe.

\*Though cooking may be time consuming, the price advantage is hard to argue. Try out some of the easy recipes detailed in “Healthful recipes that won’t break your budget”.

## Recipes

Below are some recipes found through the Cooperative Extension of the University of New Hampshire. These recipes are not only cost effective, but also easy to make and nutritious. Try them out and see how possible it is to eat healthy for less money!

### ***Corn Chowder***



**Serves:** 6

**Serving size:** 1 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup

**Preparation time:** 5 minutes

**Cook time:** 15-20 minutes

**Cost:** \$0.52/serving

**Tips:** Add one extra tablespoon of flour if you want the chowder a little thicker.

**Time Savers:** Use small red potatoes cut in quarters or canned potatoes.

**Menu ideas:** Soups can be a light meal on their own. Adding a slice of bread or a half sandwich\* and a green salad makes a heartier meal.

2 Tbsp. margarine  
1/2 cup chopped onion, about one medium  
2 stalks celery, chopped, about 1 cup  
1 Tbsp. flour  
4 cups 1% milk  
1/4 tsp. salt  
1/8 tsp. pepper  
1 14.5-oz. can cream-style corn or 1 15-oz. can regular corn  
2 whole potatoes, peeled and diced into 1/2 inch cubes

1. Melt margarine in 3 quart saucepan.
2. Add onion and celery and cook over medium-high heat, stirring constantly, until onion is tender.
3. Remove from heat. Stir in flour.
4. Cook over low heat, stirring constantly, until mixture is bubbly.
5. Remove from heat. Stir in milk. Add potatoes. Reduce heat.
6. Heat to boiling, stirring constantly. Stir in salt, pepper and corn. Simmer for 5 minutes.

## ***Crispy Oven Chicken***

*A healthy variation on a fried chicken favorite.*

**Serves:** 4

**Serving size:** 6 ounces

**Preparation Time:** 15 minutes

**Cook time:** 30 minutes

**Cost:** \$0.76/serving

**Menu ideas:** Serve chicken with mixed vegetables and Sweet Potatoes\* or Fried Plantains\*.

**Tips:** Chicken can carry harmful bacteria. Make sure to wash your hands, cutting boards or plates, utensils and the counter with hot soapy water after cutting and handling raw chicken.

To remove bone from chicken thighs, place chicken on a cutting board or plate. Remove skin. Turn thigh over, and cut around bone to remove it.

1 1/2 pounds boneless chicken thighs,  
or 1 3/4 chicken thighs with bone.

1/4 cup nonfat or 1% milk

1/2 cup flour

1 tsp. paprika

1/2 tsp. black pepper

1 cup corn type cereal flakes

4 Tbsp. canola oil

1/4 tsp. onion powder

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
2. Remove skin and fat from chicken.
3. Place milk in a shallow bowl. Combine flour, paprika and pepper on a plate. Put cereal on another plate and crush.
4. Place chicken into the milk and turn to coat.
5. Dip each chicken piece into flour.
6. Return chicken to milk and turn to coat.
7. Dip each chicken piece into crushed cereal.
8. Put chicken on a foil lined baking sheet, drizzle oil over chicken.
9. Bake at 400 degrees for 15 minutes. Turn chicken over and continue to bake until crust is crisp about 15 minutes more.

## ***Chili Mac***

**Serves:** 10

**Serving size:** 1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> cup

**Preparation and cook time:**

25 minutes

**Cost:** \$0.73/serving

**Tips:** Since you won't be using the full can of tomato paste, freeze the remainder in a plastic baggie. Seal and label for future use. A little tomato paste adds color and zip to many homemade stews and soups.

**Menu ideas:** Goes well with a green salad, such as spinach or a tossed salad, and a piece of fruit or any fruit salad. Add lettuce, frozen green beans, broccoli, or corn to boost your vegetable servings.

**Freezes well.**

- 1 pound ground beef or extra lean ground turkey
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 3 tsp. chili powder
- 1/8 tsp. garlic powder
- 1 large green pepper, chopped
- 2 15-oz cans small red beans or black beans, drained and rinsed
- 2 14.5-oz. cans diced tomatoes with juice
- 1/2 cup tomato paste
- 1 1/2 cups dry elbow macaroni
- 1 cup shredded reduced-fat cheddar cheese

1. Spray a 4-6 quart saucepan or large skillet with non-stick vegetable spray; add ground meat, onions, garlic, chili powder, and green pepper. Chop up meat and stir until meat is cooked through and no longer pink (ground turkey should turn white).
2. Meanwhile, cook the macaroni following package directions, but omit salt.
3. Add the drained beans, tomatoes, and tomato paste to the ground meat mix. Bring the sauce to a boil, and reduce heat. Cover and simmer for 4-5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add water if sauce becomes too thick.

4. Combine cooked macaroni and sauce. Sprinkle with cheese. Cover and cook over low heat until cheese melts.

## ***Green Beans with Tomatoes and Herbs***

*Jazz up plain green beans with ingredients you probably have on hand.*



**Serves:** 4

**Serving size:** 1/2 cup

**Preparation and cook time:** 20 minutes

**Cost:** \$0.36/serving

**Tips:** If using canned green beans add them and just heat through. Fresh green beans are in season from July to August.

- 1 tsp. canola oil
- 2 garlic cloves, finely minced or 1/4 tsp. garlic powder
- 1 small onion, minced
- 1 large ripe tomato, diced or 1/2 14.5-oz. can diced tomatoes
- 1/2 tsp. dried basil
- 1/2 tsp. dried oregano
- 3/4 pound green beans, fresh, canned, or frozen

1. In nonstick skillet, heat oil over medium heat.
2. Add garlic and onion, and sauté for 5 minutes.
3. Add tomato, basil and oregano. Cook 2 minutes.
4. Rinse and add green beans. Cover and cook 6 minutes.

Adaptation from a recipe from the American Institute for Cancer Research

## ***Oven Fries***

**Serves:** 4

**Serving size:** 1/2 cup

**Preparation time:** 10 minutes

**Cook time:** 25-30 minutes

**Cost:** \$0.38/serving

**Menu ideas:** Healthier than French fries, Oven Fries make a great snack or side to hamburgers, Zucchini Burgers\* (Recipe available at UNH website), or Alaskan Salmon Burgers\*.

**Tips:** Try with other seasonings, like paprika or oregano for a different flavor

1 large sweet potato sliced into strips

1 large white potato, sliced into strips

2 Tbsp. canola oil

1/2 tsp. chili powder or pepper

1/2 tsp. paprika

1/2 tsp. salt

1. Preheat oven to 450 degrees.

2. Combine oil, chili powder or pepper, and paprika in a bowl and mix well.

3. Add potatoes and mix until they are coated with the oil and spices.

4. Arrange potatoes in a single layer on baking sheet. Bake for 25-30 minutes.

Turn fries over halfway through, and continue baking.

5. Remove from oven, place on paper towel, and sprinkle with small amount of salt.

## ***Apple Crisp***



**Serves:** 6

**Serving size:** 1/2 cup

**Preparation time:** 10 minutes

**Cook time:** 30 minutes

**Cost:** \$0.37/serving

4 cups sliced tart apples

2/3 cup packed brown sugar

1/2 cup all-purpose flour

1/2 cup oats

1/3 cup margarine or butter, softened

3/4 tsp. cinnamon

3/4 tsp. nutmeg

1. Heat oven to 375 degrees.

2. Arrange apples in greased square pan, 8x8x2 inches.

3. Mix remaining ingredients; sprinkle over apples.

4. Bake until topping is golden brown and apples are tender, about 30 minutes.  
Serve warm.

## ***Easy Rice Pudding***

**Serves:** 6

**Serving size:** 1/2 cup

**Preparation and cook time:**

10 minutes

**Cost:** \$0.33/serving

**Tips:** Use leftover rice from other meals, such as Stuffed Peppers\*, to make rice pudding for breakfast or lunch.

1 package instant vanilla pudding mix

2 cups non-fat milk

1 cup cooked rice

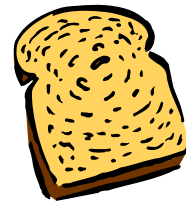
1/2 cup raisins

1 tsp. vanilla

1/4 tsp. cinnamon

1. Make vanilla pudding according to package directions using non-fat milk.
2. Add rice, raisins, vanilla and cinnamon and mix well.
3. Chill in the refrigerator before serving.

## ***French Toast***



**Serves:** 4

**Serving size:** 2 slices

**Preparation time:** 5 minutes

**Cook time:** 10 minutes

**Cost:** \$0.46/serving

**Serving suggestion:**

Try applesauce or other fruit as a topping

3 large eggs or 3/4 cup egg substitute

1 cup milk, nonfat or 1%

8 slices raisin bread

dash of cinnamon

1 tsp. margarine

1. Beat eggs and milk together in pie pan or bowl.
  2. Melt margarine in skillet.
  3. Dip bread quickly in egg mixture to coat.
  4. Brown one side in skillet. Sprinkle top side with cinnamon. Turn, brown second side.
- Serve immediately.

## Tips for eating out



Eating at a restaurant tends to be either expensive, unhealthy or both. Not only does the food tend to be higher in fat and sodium, but people are also more likely to overeat when dining out. That being said, it is also fun and a time saver. Fortunately it is possible to eat out on any budget and still eat healthily.

**Don't** super-size just because it seems like a good deal. It is probably too much food for you, so that you will eat too much and/or waste food that you are unable to eat.

**Do** try to either choose smaller portions or split a larger meal with someone else. This will ensure that you only pay for the food you can eat and also avoid excess fat and calorie intake that could lead to weight gain and health problems if regularly achieved.

**Don't** consume vast amounts of soda just because you can. Not only can soda be expensive, but it is an empty source of calories, meaning you ingest a lot of sugar without the benefits of nutrients.

**Do** get low fat milk or drink tap water (it's free!). But if you do want that soda, get a regular sized one and resist the temptation to get refills.

**Don't** forget about your fruits and vegetables!

**Do** try to get fruits and vegetables in your meal out. Load sandwiches or burgers up with lettuce, tomato and other available options. Choose vegetables as a side dish or as a topping if possible.

**Don't** choose extra toppings and cooking techniques that add excess fat to your meal such as mayonnaise or deep frying.

**Do** pick lower fat options such as baking or grilling and limit use of fattening sauces, dressing or gravy.

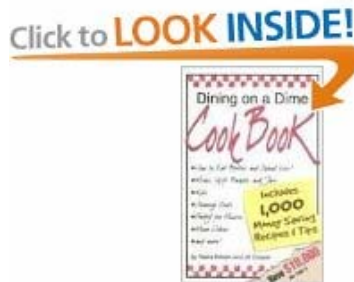


## In Summary

A balanced diet provides much needed nourishment for your body. Getting all of the food groups may seem like a daunting task, but it is easy to do for an affordable cost with a few simple strategies.

Through a combination of planning your meals, smart shopping and cooking at home, delicious food can be yours at an affordable cost. Make every cent work for you by making smart choices and avoiding waste. Doing this can be easy and doesn't have to break your budget.

## Promotion and Prize



Stop by the Healthy Eating Tip of the Month board in the hospital cafeteria to pick up additional educational materials and to enter a drawing to win "Dining on a Dime Cookbook" by Tawra Jean Kellam and Jill Cooper. This book contains 1000 money saving recipes and tips designed to help you achieve good nutrition while saving money.

## Links for further information

Visit the websites below to learn more information about this topic:

1. 66 ways to save money  
[http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov/cic\\_text/money/66ways/66ways.pdf](http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov/cic_text/money/66ways/66ways.pdf)

2. Save time and money while eating more fruits and vegetables, the center for disease control

[http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov/downloads/eat\\_more\\_fv\\_text.pdf](http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov/downloads/eat_more_fv_text.pdf)

4. Get smart as you shop:

<http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov/publications/index.html>

5. University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension recipes and tips

<http://extension.unh.edu/FoodNutr/Docs/QEM04.pdf>

More at: <http://extension.unh.edu/pubs/PubsFN.htm>

6. FFVP Resource guide

<http://www.nde.state.ne.us/NS/nslp/FFVP/FFVP%20A%20Resource%20Guide.pdf>

7. The thrifty food plan, 2006.

[www.cnpp.usda.gov/publications/foodplans/miscpubs/tfp2006report.pdf](http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/publications/foodplans/miscpubs/tfp2006report.pdf)

8. The United States Department of Agriculture, My Pyramid: Steps to a healthier you:

[www.Mypyramid.gov](http://www.Mypyramid.gov)