

Healthy Eating on a **BUDGET**



When shopping on a budget, we usually choose to buy the foods that are on sale or are the least expensive. Although it sounds like a good idea, focusing too much on the cost of food can lead to a lack of variety of foods purchased, and even to higher grocery bills. When the goal is to eat more nutritious foods, it can feel even more difficult to know how to shop. Here are some tips to get you started on saving money on healthy food for your family.



1 Fruits and vegetables are actually cheaper than less healthy foods

Most fruits and vegetables (including frozen) are less expensive than packaged convenience foods when comparing them by serving sizes. Fruits and vegetables are nutrient-dense foods, so you are also getting all of the good-for-you nutrients that our bodies need, but not always found in other foods. Take a look at the back of this handout, which explains how much cheaper fruits and vegetables actually are per cup serving!

2 Buying foods on sale does not always save money

A sale or coupon will only save you money if you were going to buy the item anyway. Stores put sale prices on foods people wouldn't usually buy or on items they have sell fast because they are about to expire. Buying items because they are on sale can actually lead to spending more on "extra" foods that you didn't plan on buying. Think about it... would grocery stores have sales or offer coupons if it made you spend less money in their stores?

3 Fast food is more expensive than eating at home

Dollar menus and combo meals make you think you are saving money, when really you end up buying more food than you would have. Spending \$5 on a lunch may seem like a good deal, but not if you could have bought enough ingredients to make 4-7 lunches with that same \$5. Try eating all of your meals from home for a week or two and see how much you save!



- Cook meals at home.
- Make extra for leftovers for lunches
- Ask yourself, "Would I usually buy this if it wasn't on sale?" If not, you are not saving any money.
- Have water as your drink. Glass of tap water = 1 cent.
- Buy "raw" produce. Peeled carrots and bagged salads spoil faster and cost 2-3 times more than whole carrots and heads of lettuce, and don't save you much time. Prepping vegetables is a great way to get kids to help!
- Frozen fruits and vegetables are just as nutrition as fresh produce!

It can be hard to tell if fresh produce is cheaper than packaged snacks until you compare the two side by side.

Take a look at the bag of potato chips compared to having an apple and banana. The **apple and banana** are:

- Lower in price
- Contains more vitamins and nutrients (nutrient-dense)
- More filling



Bag of Potato Chips

\$1.00
300 calories
Not very filling
Low in nutrients

VS



An Apple & Banana

\$0.70
175 calories
Very filling
Very nutritious

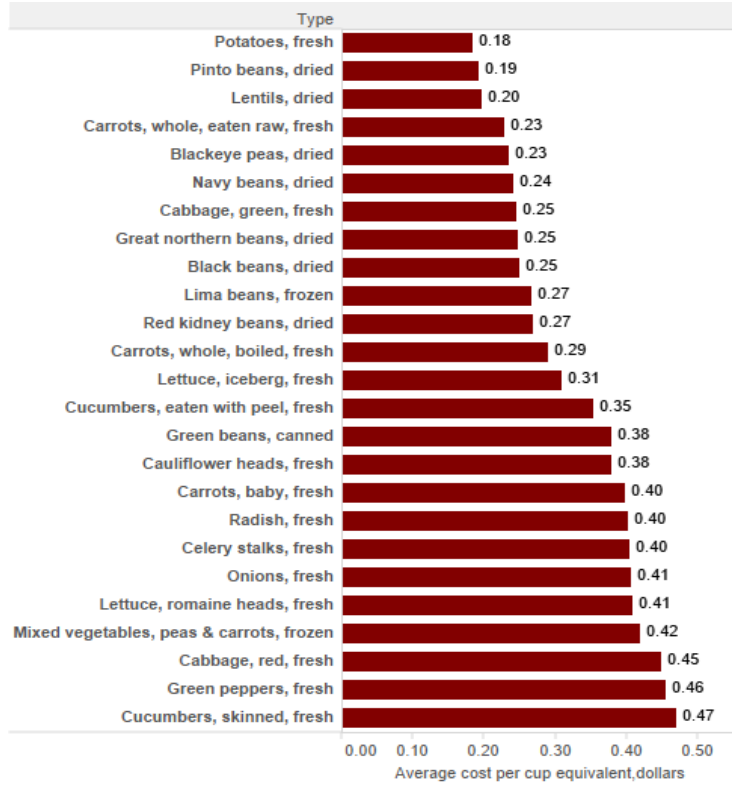
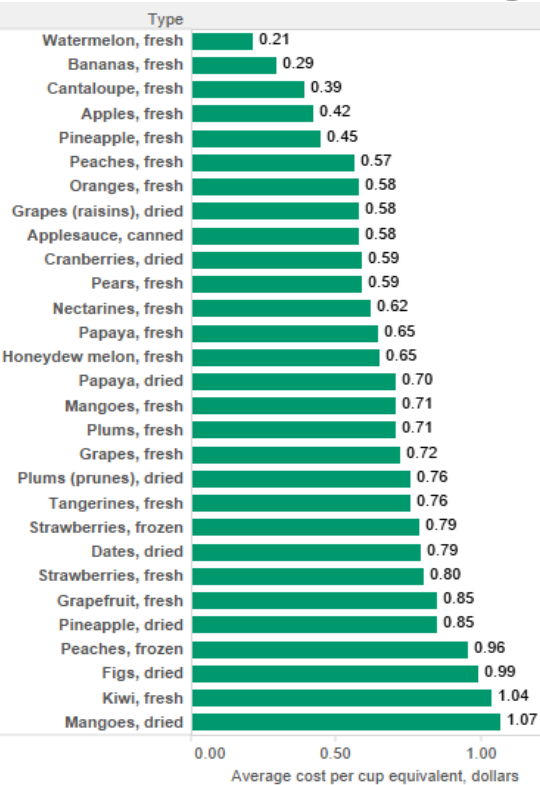


Try something new:

- Frozen vegetables – steam or roast with olive oil, herbs and spices. Mix with pasta, rice, eggs, or stir-fry.
- Frozen fruit – mix with oatmeal or yogurt.

Fresh produce is usually sold per pound, which can be a little confusing when trying to figure out the price of one serving. The figure below, created by the US Department of Agriculture, gives a breakdown of the average price of fruits and vegetables by cup. Use this chart to compare how much cheaper a one cup serving of fruits and vegetables is compared to single servings of packaged foods or even ready-to-eat and fast food!

Average price by cup of **FRUITS** & **VEGETABLES**



Figures from: <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/fruit-and-vegetable-prices/>