



Heart-Healthy Tips: Ways to Stretch Your Fruit and Vegetable Budget

When budgets are tight, trim your grocery list without eliminating important vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients found in fruits and vegetables. These tips from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention outline ways to stretch your food budget and stay healthy at the same time.

- ▶ Calculate an appropriate Healthy Food Budget for your family, based on the USDA's Low-Cost Food plan. An easy-to-use calculator is offered on Iowa State University Extension's web site to help create a budget for what is a reasonable amount to spend to feed your family healthy meals.
- ▶ Cook enough for several meals and freeze leftovers. Place enough food for 1-2 meals in each container.
- ▶ Create a meal plan for the week that uses similar fruits and vegetables, prepared in different ways. Make the most of the produce that you buy.
- ▶ Mix it yourself. 100 percent juice from frozen concentrate is often less expensive per serving than pre-bottled juice.
- ▶ Be creative! To get the most out of your purchase, enjoy your fruits and vegetables in different ways. For example, you can use fruits for dessert. Try baking apples or poaching pears with some cinnamon.
- ▶ Homemade soup is a healthy and tasty way to use vegetables. Make a big batch and freeze leftovers in small lunch-size containers.
- ▶ Cut your fruits and vegetables at home. Pre-cut produce can cost much more than whole fruits and vegetables.
- ▶ Don't shop hungry. Eat a healthy snack, such as an apple, before going to the grocery store so that you stick to your budget and avoid spending money set aside for fruits and vegetables on less healthy temptations.
- ▶ Maximize your time and money. Cut coupons for only the foods, such as fruits and vegetables, on your grocery list.
- ▶ Canned fruits and vegetables will last a long time and can be a healthy addition to a variety of meals. Choose canned vegetables that have no added salt and fruit that is canned in 100 percent fruit juice.
- ▶ Frozen fruits and vegetables store well in the freezer until you're ready to add them to a meal.
- ▶ Store-brands can be a great budget choice for many forms of fruits and vegetables.
- ▶ Keep it simple. Buy dried beans, peas, and lentils in their raw and uncooked form instead of the processed and packaged versions which cost more.

Find more health and wellness tips and resources for first responders at www.healthy-firefighter.org.

- ▶ Avoid buying single servings. Purchasing many small packages of produce is often more expensive than buying in larger amounts.
- ▶ To make many fresh fruits and vegetables last longer, store them in the refrigerator or freezer soon after getting home from your shopping trip. Many cookbooks offer specific freezing instructions.
- ▶ Clearly label your foods in the freezer and refrigerator with the contents and date to stay within a safe time frame.
- ▶ Get creative with your leftover fruits and vegetables. Make salsa from your tomatoes and smoothies from your fruits!