

Planning is Key to Healthy Grocery Shopping on a Budget

Tips for success:

- ⇒ Set a weekly food budget and keep track of spending. Many shoppers have no idea how much they really spend or what percentage of their expenses go toward non-essential items. Keep grocery receipts and review how money is spent on a few trips to the store.
- ⇒ Avoid “panic shopping” or shopping while hungry. Running into the grocery store after picking up the kids at childcare after work is a recipe for shopping disaster. It’s easy to give in to packaged foods, ‘treats’ for cranky kids and overspending.
- ⇒ Engage the family in making a food plan and developing a weekly menu. Seek healthy alternative recipes to family favorites – reduce sodium, switch to whole grain pasta, add pureed veggies. Don’t forget to budget for fun such as a dinner out or a trip for ice cream. Knowing that a family ‘treat’ is scheduled for Friday can limit the impulses during the week.
- ⇒ Prepare a shopping list by categories and in order of sections of your usual store. Start in the produce aisle and move through the perimeter of the store. Venture only to the inner aisles for specific items like canned fruit and vegetables or multigrain pasta. Generally, the more wandering the more impulse buys and if kids are in tow, even more so.
- ⇒ Allow time to compare prices of various labels and package sizes. Store brands often offer significant savings. Generally, buying a larger size saves cents per ounce but the opposite can also be true. Check specials. Two 8 oz. packages on sale can be cheaper than one 16 oz. package. A few minutes spent checking the math in the aisles can add up to meaningful savings in the check out lane.
- ⇒ Make more now, save the rest for later. As a rule, the more families’ ‘make,’ the more they ‘save’ and are able to eat more healthfully. That means preparing meals for the day or ahead of time for later in the week instead of cooking convenience foods that are more costly and tend to be higher in fat and sodium. Families can also double a recipe and freeze the extra for a busy evening.