



Nutrition on a budget – Kirsten Brooks

Eating healthily has never been more in focus, yet at a time of economic hardship, many people feel they cannot afford to do so. But eating nutritious foods and cutting costs do not need to be mutually exclusive. Here are some useful tips for healthy eating on a budget and selecting nutrient dense food – good for both your waist and your wallet.

What you can do

Make it yourself. This may be at odds with our culture of convenience, but eating home cooked meals means we have much more control over what we eat and is very cost-effective. Consider taking your lunches to work and keep eating out to an occasional indulgence. Although shop-bought foods may be marketed as ‘healthy’ they often contain too much sugar, fat, salt and nasty, artificial ingredients – the latter is especially the case with low fat versions.

Avoid waste. Prepare home cooked food in large batches, and freeze extras, especially if this avoids going for second helpings. Most people just eat too much. Take left overs to work for lunch.

Plan ahead. Go to the supermarket armed with a shopping list and plan your meals ahead and this way you are more likely to spend within your means.

Eat less meat. With the recent coverage of the horse meat scandal, now is a great time to look at vegetarian protein sources. Beans and lentils are inexpensive and are a good source of fibre and nutrients. They provide slow release energy – so are ideal for weight management. Use them to replace or limit meat and bulk out casseroles, salads, soups and stews. Also look out for less expensive cuts of meats such as stewing steaks.

Go wholegrain. Whilst wholegrain brown rice, bread and pasta may be marginally more expensive than the white varieties, they are so much more filling and nutritious, so are likely to reduce the urge for seconds. Good old fashion oats are a fantastic staple - cheap and wholesome and can replace pricey processed cereals.

Don't rule out frozen fruit and vegetables. We all know we should be eating more fruit and veg, and frozen varieties are often cheaper and as nutritious, as they are frozen straight after being picked. Also use herbs and spices instead of shop-bought (often sugary) sauces, and consider growing herbs or lettuce on a window sill.

Shop locally. Check out farmers markets and local butchers for economical options. This also helps support our local communities and often ensures fresher, more nutrient dense food.

Drink more water and eat slowly. Many people confuse thirst for hunger, so keep yourself hydrated instead of indulging in empty, calorific foods. And also chew, chew, chew - speed eating prevents our brain getting the message we are full, leads us to being bloated, potentially over-weight and spending too much on unnecessary food!

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