



WELLNESS CONNECTION

Healthy Eating on a Budget



Food is probably your second biggest expense, right after housing. With the economy on the downturn and food prices on the rise, many families and individuals are taking a thrifter approach to mealtime. You may be stuck with set mortgage payments or rent, but you can likely trim some real fat from your food budget.

A family of four with two school age children could easily spend \$1,100 or more at the grocery store each month, according to an October 2008 estimate from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). That doesn't even include restaurant meals, a major expense for some families. The USDA also says that with a few simple changes in buying habits, a family could chop \$300 or even \$500 from that bill every month without sacrificing nutrition. That's a potential \$6,000 in savings in just one year.

How does the USDA account for the savings? By reducing waste (eating food before it goes bad), getting whole grains from bread and pasta rather than pricey cereals, buying cheaper vegetables like potatoes and carrots, and using less expensive meats (chicken as opposed to pork or veal) and other forms of protein, for starters. Whether you save thousands of dollars using these tips, the message is still the same: smart shopping – and smart eating – could be your own economic stimulus program.

Healthy Foods, Low Prices. If you skip the pre-packaged meals and fancy cuts of meat, you can find all sorts of nutritious foods that cost less than \$1 per serving.

For example, eggs, tofu, or boneless, skinless chicken breasts (purchased frozen in a large bag) are all inexpensive sources of protein. Loaves of bread, oats, brown rice, and other grains almost never cost more than \$1 per serving. Milk and

bulk cheeses can cover your dairy needs, and you'll have no shortage of fruits and vegetables to choose from. According to the American Dietetic Association, you could easily get your full allotment of fruits and vegetables for just \$2.50 each day. For one dramatic example, you could buy four pounds (16 servings) of fresh red potatoes for the price of a single 9-ounce bag of potato chips. Don't forget beans – they're nutritious and easy on the wallet, too.

Eating In. Americans of moderate means are eating fewer meals in restaurants, which is a smart move in tough economic times. According to a December 2008 Gallup Poll, only 47 percent of lower middle-income people reported eating out in the previous week, compared with 61 percent in 2005.

If you're looking to trim your food budget, remember that cooking at home is almost always cheaper than eating out. When you eat at a restaurant, you're paying for the salaries of employees, rent for the building, and maybe some franchise fees in addition to the actual food. That restaurant meal may be tasty and convenient, but it's not going to be a bargain.

Even the drive-thru lane is no money saver. Consider, four McDonald's Extra Value Meals – that's four medium drinks, four sandwiches, and four medium fries – can easily add up to \$25 or \$30. Cooking at home, you could serve a near-gourmet meal of four 6-oz. sirloin steaks, four servings of roasted potatoes, four large salad servings, and four large glasses of milk or juice for less money. Choose a cheaper cut of meat or buy your steaks on special, and your steak dinner would be significantly cheaper than McDonald's. A slightly more mundane meal of spaghetti and meat sauce with salad could easily cost less than \$15 – hamburger, pasta, tomato sauce, garlic, oregano, greens, dressing, drinks, and all. And you just might be able to reheat some leftovers for tomorrow's lunch. Try doing that with a burger and fries.

Source: Food and Nutrition Health Library

Copyright© 2019 LimeHealth. All Rights Reserved.



Meditation and Health

What is meditation? Do you ever feel like your brain is too stuffed with thoughts? Between the errands that you need to do tomorrow, the lingering issues from yesterday, and the work in front of you today, it can be hard to find room for a positive emotion or a moment of peace. **Meditation is a mental exercise that tries to tune out the mental clutter, giving the brain and body a chance to relax.** A national government survey conducted in 2007 suggests that over 20 million Americans had tried meditation at least once in the previous year.

How does it work? In simplest terms, meditation can help protect you from the effects of stress. In normal life, stress triggers hormones that will increase your heart rate, raise your blood pressure, and generally put your body on high alert. **But if you can relax your mind, your body will make fewer of these hormones, giving you protection from the harmful effects of stress.**

What are the health benefits? People who meditate say that it helps with a wide variety of stress-related problems, including chronic pain, anxiety, insomnia, and depression. Many people who have a chronic illness such as cancer or heart disease say that meditation helps them manage their symptoms and cope with their illness. For example, a small Swedish study of cancer patients published in 2010 found that most, but not all, subjects **felt better** after an 8-week meditation course. Reported benefits included **greater calm, better sleep, more energy, and less pain.**

How do I do it? Find a quiet place free of distractions. Most people meditate while sitting on the floor, but you can also sit in a chair or lie down – whatever feels comfortable. With your eyes closed, start taking deep, gentle breaths. To help clear your thoughts and move to a meditative state, repeat a simple word or phrase in your mind. This is your “mantra.” You can also try focusing your mind on a single image, a symbol, or your breathing. Try to ignore any other thoughts that come into your head. You should feel yourself slip into a state of pleasant relaxation. If you’re a beginner, you may find it hard to keep your mind clear. Don’t get down on yourself; this takes practice. You might try starting with short, 5-minute sessions. As you become more familiar with the process, you can gradually build up to 20 minutes or longer. To get the full benefits, try doing it every day.

Should I take a class? A lot of meditators are self-taught. Still, a class can be helpful for beginners. An experienced teacher can help you find an approach that works for you. Look for classes at the YMCA, a local hospital or through a local adult education program. There are also many books and audio and video tapes on meditation techniques that can help you get started.

Source: Holistic Medicine Health Library

Copyright© 2019 LimeHealth. All Rights Reserved.



A Tasty Way to Enjoy More Carrots

Carrot sticks are fine for a snack, but that’s far from the only way to get these tasty veggies into your diet.

Carrots are naturally high in beta carotene, and they’re great for liver and skin health. These sweet root vegetables come in a wide range of colors, all of which are nutritious. When buying carrots, choose those that are firm and without cracks. Store them in the fridge for up to two weeks. Note: baby carrots are no different than regular carrots except that they’ve been cut down to a small size, at a cost to consumers.

Because carrots add great crunch to dishes, you can use them raw in many types of vegetable-based salads. They’re also a great addition to salad dressings.

Try it over a simple salad as suggested or over steamed green beans or almost any vegetable to give it more zing. Best of all, it requires zero cooking.

Copyright© 2019 HealthDay. All rights reserved.

