

Healthy Lifestyle

Saving dollars on food

Planning makes the difference

Use these steps to plan your trip to the store or market.

1. Make a food budget and stick to it! Figure out how much money you have for food. Include the value of food stamps if your family receives them.
2. Take some time on the weekends to plan meals for the coming week. If you have time, look at store sale ads and clip coupons.

When planning meals:

- Use foods that you already have.
 - Use leftovers.
 - Choose one item from three to four of the food groups (grains, meat/egg/beans/tofu, vegetable, fruit, milk products).
 - Use beans, eggs and tofu instead of meat or chicken.
 - Use fruits and vegetables that are in-season because they will cost less.
3. Make a list of the foods that you need for the meals you have planned.
 4. Review your shopping list, think about the costs and compare them to your budget. Does this list fit your budget?

Quick tips for your trip to the store or market

- Shop at farmers' markets or discount stores. They often have the freshest produce that costs less than the supermarket.
- Eat before you shop! If you are hungry, everything will look good and you may buy too much.
- Buy only the items on your list.



- Store brands often cost less than name brands. Look at the “cost per unit” on the shelf tags to compare prices.
- Know the prices of items that you buy often. This way, you will know a sale when you see it.
- Buy in bulk. Divide into smaller portions and keep for later use, or share the items and cost with neighbors or family.
- Limit items that have a lot of calories and do not provide many vitamins, minerals or fiber. Examples include soda, Kool-Aid, snack cakes, candy, chips, pickles and olives. Shop the outer aisles of the store. This is where the fresh produce, meat, fish, poultry, dairy and breads are. Only go down the aisles that have items that are on your list. The center aisles of the grocery store have many convenience items, which can cost more and have less vitamins, minerals and fiber than fresh foods.

Low-cost items to keep on hand:

- Canned fruits (packed in their own juice or light syrup)
- Canned and frozen vegetables
- Rice, pasta, bread, crackers, tortillas and potatoes

- Dried beans, peas and lentils
- Flake cereal, bread crumbs or oats. (You can mix these with ground beef to make more servings.)

Tips to save you dollars and time

Breakfast provides energy for the day. Don't skip breakfast!

- Save time in the morning by setting breakfast items out before bed.
- Keep foods that are easy to take with you at home. Raisins, fruit, granola bars and dry cereal are easy to put in your backpack or purse as you head out the door.
- Offer leftovers from the night before.

Easy breakfast recipes:

- **Waz-up waffles:** Pop frozen waffles in the toaster and top with yogurt and berries. Try whole-grain, blueberry and low-fat waffles.
- **Banana dogs:** Spread peanut butter on a banana and top with raisins.
- **In-the-bag breakfast:** Mix cereal, dried fruit (raisins, Craisins, apricots) and nuts (almonds, pecans, peanuts).
- **Cinnamon crunch:** Spread peanut butter on an apple-cinnamon rice cake.
- **Shake-it-up!:** Whirl milk, strawberries and a banana in a blender for 30 seconds.

Lunch is a chance to give your body more healthy fuel.

- Healthy lunches can be from school or brought from home.
- If your child takes lunch to school, pack it before bedtime the night before. Have your child help pick out fruit and other items.
- If your child gets school lunch, talk about choices they can make, like picking low-fat milk instead of chocolate milk.
- Use leftovers from dinner.

Easy lunch items:

- Sandwich
- Fresh fruit or fruit cup
- Baby carrots
- 1 cookie
- Milk (can be bought at school)

Your **evening meal** doesn't have to be costly or take a long time to make.

- It is tempting to order pizza or take-out, but that is costly.
- Have a list of meals you can make in 20 minutes (see below).
- Start with a starch, like rice, pasta, tortilla, potato or pizza crust and choose one item from two to three other food groups (meat or beans, vegetable or dairy).

20-minute meal ideas:

- Baked potato topped with cheese, vegetables and salsa. Serve with chicken breast, pork chops or roast beef.
- Tortilla topped with refried beans, salsa, tomatoes, peppers, onion and cooked chicken, beef or turkey.
- Pasta topped with spaghetti sauce, added vegetables and beef or turkey.

Ideas for low-cost recipes

Split pea or lentil soup

Makes 4 servings

- 1 cup uncooked dry split peas or lentils
- 1 large onion, thinly sliced
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup chopped celery
- 4 cups water
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons margarine (optional)

Wash and drain split peas. Place all items in a saucepan. Heat to boiling. Cover and cook for 30 minutes or until peas or lentils are tender.

Other options to try

- **Meaty soup:** Add pieces of cooked ham before cooking soup. Do not add the 1 teaspoon of salt.
- **Creamy pea soup:** Blend ½ cup of dry milk powder with ½ cup water. Add to soup in last 5 minutes of cooking.

Sneaky meatloaf

Makes 6 servings

1½ pounds ground beef
1 cup crushed flake cereal (Corn Flakes, Wheaties)
1 egg
½ cup grated carrots
⅓ cup spinach (frozen or fresh), cooked and drained
⅓ cup water
1 teaspoon salt

Combine ingredients. Press into loaf pan.
Bake for 1 hour at 350° F.

Resources

Local farmers' markets

These offer fresh fruits and vegetables grown and sold by local farmers. There are about 125 farmers' markets in Washington state, with 17 in the Seattle area. Most markets run spring through fall. A few run all year long. To find one in your community, call 206-706-5198 or visit www.wafarmersmarkets.com.

WIC—Women, Infants and Children Supplemental Feeding Program

This program provides food coupons, information and classes to pregnant women, new mothers, infants and children up to age 5. To find the nearest location to you and to see if your family is eligible, call 800-841-410 or visit www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/WIC/default.htm.

Food stamp program

Helps people with little or no income to buy and eat a variety of foods. To find out if your family qualifies, call 800-221-5689 or visit www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/.

To Learn More

- www.seattlechildrens.org
- Your child's healthcare provider