

Food shopping is a great first step to creating healthy eating habits. What you put in your cart each week can shape your child's health and view of food. The keys to healthy eating are planning, shopping, and making balanced meals.

## Where and when should I shop?

- Find a grocery store you like and stick with it. Knowing where to find the things you want will help you get out of the store faster.
  - The best time to shop is very early in the morning, weekend evenings, or on popular TV nights. Try not to shop right after work or on weekend mornings when stores are busiest.
  - Do not shop when you're hungry. If you are hungry, everything looks good. You are more likely to over-buy and choose foods you do not need. Eat a healthy snack or meal before you go to the grocery store.
- Avoid corner stores and gas stations. They have limited food choices and are more expensive. If you must shop here, look for healthy snack items. Look for whole fruits, dried fruits, peanuts, sunflower seeds, or a small bag of pretzels.
- Choose lower sugar drinks. These include bottled water, skim milk or low fat milk, flavored water and Crystal Light®.

## How do I shop for healthier foods?

**Plan ahead and make a list.** A grocery list will help you plan better and keep you on track. A list can also save you money. The list can help you avoid buying things you don't need. Be sure to check what you have at home first.

- **At home.** Make your list from menus for the week. Focus your menu on items such as fruits and vegetables, lean meats and poultry, fresh fish, whole grains, low-fat dairy products, and vegetable oils. If you have healthy foods on hand, you'll be less likely to reach for unhealthy ones.
- **At the store.** Start your shopping trip with the produce section. Stick to your list. Be aware of special sales or displays, the food may be less expensive but low in nutrition.
- **Do not ban sweets and snacks.** This may lead your child to overeat outside the home. Aim for moderation by having a sweet treat 1-2 times each week instead of every day. Try not to talk about bad foods as any food can fit into a healthy diet. Don't be afraid to let your child choose a treat at the store or pick ingredients to make at home.
- **Include the whole family.** Shopping for food can be a learning experience for your child. Talk about the different foods you see, and ask your child to pick out a new fruit or vegetable to try. With older children, you can cook and read food labels together.
- **Try new foods.** If you see something at the store that looks interesting, try it. It might be a new type of fresh fish, an exotic fruit or vegetable, or a new whole grain cereal.



## How can I feed my family healthy food on a budget?

- Shop in season. Look for local farmers markets during the summer and fall. Many farmers markets will double your food stamps. WIC dollars can also be used.
- Plan meals that use sale items. Stores promote sales throughout the week. Stick to single ingredient sale items such as meats, produce, canned beans and eggs.
- Use coupons for foods on your shopping list. Don't spend money just because you have a coupon. Compare prices. Even with a coupon, other brands may be less expensive. Most often, store brands cost less than name brands.
- Watch for price claims like "3 for \$2". You may not need 3 of the same item.
- Warehouse type stores are great for some large-quantity items like oil, flour, sugar, nuts, and cheese. Grocery store sales offer greater savings on meats.
- Try these healthy and inexpensive items: frozen and canned vegetables, seasonal vegetables, canned and dried beans, eggs, dried whole wheat pasta, and brown rice.
- Get the most from what you buy:
  - Wash and cut up fruits and vegetables right away so they are easy to grab as snacks. Don't leave them turning to mush in the back of the refrigerator.
  - Make meals ahead of time and freeze them. When you're tired and hungry, you can just pop the food in the oven!



## Other helpful teaching sheets

# [1262](#) How to Read Food Labels

# [1558](#) Go, Slow, Whoa

**ALERT:** Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

**This sheet was created to help you care for your child or family member. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment and follow-up.**