

# Healthy eating on a budget



Some people think eating healthily is expensive. But this is not necessarily the case. Here are a few tips to help stretch your budget:

Take time to **plan your meals** and then compile a grocery list of everything you need. This will help you avoid making impulse purchases and opportunistic shopping. When planning meals, try to think of recipes that you can double up for ingredients. For example, if you have a green pepper, you could use half in a vegetable stir fry and half in a chicken curry. You could also save money by bulk buying ingredients that keep well such as pasta, dried pulses or rice.

**See what's on special offer** at your usual supermarket and stock up on long shelf-life products. Every week, check the frozen and canned vegetable section and buy items that are cheaper or discounted so you always have a variety of mixed vegetables in the freezer and the cupboard.

**Frozen vegetables** tend to be cheaper than fresh varieties but still count towards your 5 A DAY. You can use them when you want and in the amounts you need which cuts down on wastage.

**Canned oily fish** such as sardines and salmon can be cheaper than buying fresh fish. They are a good source of omega-3 fats which can help to keep the heart healthy, plus they are easy to prepare and have a long shelf life. Opt for ones in spring water to keep the salt content to a minimum. It is recommended that we eat two portions of fish per week at least one of which should be oily.

Products such as canned tomatoes, beans and pulses, rice, pasta, oatmeal and barley are low cost items and can be a useful and healthy addition to **bulk up meals** and make them go further. Try adding them to soups, stews and casseroles. Beans and pulses are a good source of protein and fibre while rice, pasta, oatmeal and barley are a good source of starchy carbohydrate and can also boost the fibre content of your diet.

**Use leftover vegetables** to make soups and salads. When you make your own soup, you can add as many vegetables as you like and you can control the amount of other ingredients, such as salt, stock and fat that you add. Finely chop leftover vegetables and any leftover cooked meat and add to couscous to make a fast and nutritious meal.

Fresh fruit and vegetables can be cheaper if you buy them from the **local market** rather than the supermarket. By selecting loose fresh produce, you can buy a greater variety of fruit and vegetables, and cut down on waste packaging at the same time.

**Fresh fruit and vegetables in season** are often cheaper as well as tastier. Overripe soft fruits can be chopped up and combined with frozen berries to make delicious smoothies.

**Make your own healthy packed lunch.** Not only will you save pounds each week, you'll control what you eat. Leftovers also make delicious, cheap and healthy alternatives to processed lunch meals that can often be high in fat and salt.

Breakfast is an important start to the day and **porridge** is a great choice. It's cheap, and has no added salt or sugar. If you don't fancy hot cereal, try mixing oats with plain low fat yogurt and some grated apple and cinnamon.

**Make your own frozen meals** by doubling your recipes and freezing half. Put chilli, cottage pies, soups and stews in freezer and microwave safe containers for quick lunches you can reheat with ease.

**Keep an eye on your portion sizes** and try not to cook more than you need. Measure out foods like pasta and rice before you cook rather than guessing portions. Not only will it help you to save money, but can stop you from over-eating

Vegetables and beans tend to cost less than meat, so try **adding more vegetables** to your meat based meals. The meat will go further saving you money and it will help to keep the saturated fat content of the dish down too.

**Limit eating out.** It is often easier to grab meals on the go but remember, you pay extra for that convenience. If you want to save money and eat healthily, consider bringing your own lunch a few times per week and cut back on dining out when possible.