

) &"-5) : &"5*/ (

10 Tips for Eating Healthy on a Budget

Even when you know [what healthy foods to choose](#), being able to pay for them can be hard, especially if you are on a fixed income. Start by deciding how much you can afford to spend on food.

There are websites that can help you plan a food budget. For example, the U.S. Department of Agriculture supports Iowa State University's [Spend Smart-Eat Smart](#) . This website also has inexpensive recipes based on the [Dietary Guidelines](#).



Once you have a budget, find store ads in the newspaper or grocery store websites to see what is on sale. Try to plan some meals around featured items and pick up some extra canned goods or staples that are on sale. And check the expiration or use-by date. A product might be on sale because it is almost out of date. Choose items with dates farthest in the future.


While shopping, make use of these budget-wise 10 tips.

1. **Ask about discounts.** Ask your local grocery stores if they have a senior discount or a loyalty or discount card. Besides getting items at a lower price, you may also get store coupons.
2. **Use coupons when you can.** Remember, coupons only help if they are for things you would buy anyway. Sometimes, another brand costs less even after you use the coupon.
3. **Consider store brands—they usually cost less.** These products

An infographic with a light blue background. At the top, it says "DIET AND EXERCISE: Choices Today for a Healthier Tomorrow". Below that, it says "Eating a healthy diet and exercising often can help control or delay health issues associated with aging, like high blood pressure and diabetes." At the bottom, there is an illustration of a woman with grey hair and glasses, wearing a green shirt and a red skirt, holding a white object. To her right, a dark blue box contains the text "Set short-term goals to achieve and maintain a healthy diet and exercise routine." The bottom of the infographic features a white picket fence.

are made under a special label, sometimes with the store name. You might have to look on shelves that are higher or lower than eye level to find them.

4. **Be aware that convenience costs more.** You can often save money if you are willing to do a little work. For example, buy whole chickens and cut them into parts, shred or grate your own cheese, and avoid instant rice or instant oatmeal. Bagged salad mixes cost more and might not stay fresh as long as a head of lettuce.
5. **Look at unit prices.** Those small stickers on the shelves tell you the price but also the unit price—how much the item costs per ounce or per pound. Compare unit prices to see which brand is the best value.
6. **Try to buy in bulk,** but only buy a size you can use before it goes bad. If you buy meat in bulk, decide what you need to use that day and freeze the rest in portion-sized packages right away.
7. **Focus on economical fruits and vegetables** like bananas, apples, oranges, cabbage, sweet potatoes, dark-green leafy vegetables, green peppers, and regular carrots.
8. **Think about the foods you throw away.** For less waste, buy or cook only what you need.
9. **Resist temptations at the check-out.** Those snack foods and candy are put there for impulse buying. Save money *and* avoid [empty calories](#)!
10. **Sign up for meal delivery.** While some older people have trouble finding enough money to buy food, others need help preparing meals. There are a variety of groups around the country that deliver meals to people who have trouble getting out of their homes. These groups usually offer one hot meal a day. One of the largest is [Meals on Wheels America](#) .



Read and share this [infographic](#) to learn more about lifestyle changes you can make today for healthier aging.

National Resources for Locating Help with Food Costs

There are several ways to learn more about programs that offer help with meals or food costs. Use one of these services:

- [Eldercare Locator](#) or call 1-800-677-1116 (toll-free)
- [Federal and state benefit information](#) or call 1-800-333-4636 (toll-free)
- [National Council on Aging](#) or call 1-571-527-3900

No matter how careful you are, the cost of food can still eat up a big part of your budget. There may be additional help. For more resources to help with shopping and food costs, visit [NIA's healthy eating resources](#).

Learn about [shopping for food that's good for you](#).

For More Information on Healthy Eating on a Budget

Eldercare Locator

1-800-677-1116 (toll-free)

eldercarelocator@n4a.org

<https://eldercare.acl.gov>

USDA Food and Nutrition Information Center

National Agricultural Library

1-301-504-5755

fnic@ars.usda.gov

www.nal.usda.gov/fnic

BenefitsCheckUp

1-571-527-3900

www.benefitscheckup.org

National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs

1-202-682-6899

www.nanasp.org

This content is provided by the National Institute on Aging (NIA), part of the National Institutes of Health. NIA scientists and other experts review this content to ensure that it is accurate, authoritative, and up to date.

Content reviewed: April 30, 2019

RELATED ARTICLES



Getting Enough Fluids



Dietary Supplements



Maintaining a Healthy Weight

