

Eating healthy in poor economy

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With today's economy, we could all benefit from a little extra cash in our pockets.

As a dietitian, I often hear people say, "Eating healthy is expensive." I have to agree choosing nutritious food is more expensive than choosing foods that tend to be less nutritious.

One of the reasons is less nutritious foods tend to have a longer shelf life, making them more economical for grocery stores and families alike. With the passage of New Year's and so many Americans having made the resolution to lose weight or eat healthier, I would like to offer some advice on how to do so in a cost friendly way. I visited a couple grocery stores in the area and this is what I found:

Consider buying dry powdered milk. Simply add water to the dry powdered milk mix to make milk. Also, adding powdered milk to foods like puddings, mashed potatoes and soups can be an inexpensive way of substituting milk in recipes and adding protein to foods if you are unable to get adequate protein in your diet. Compare the cost of nonfat dry powdered milk at \$0.98 per quart to a quart of skim milk at \$1.79. If you're trying to add additional protein to your diet, compare the cost of dry milk powder at \$0.12 per gram of protein to commercially available protein supplements that may cost much more per gram.

If fresh fruit is not an option, give consideration to buying canned fruit in its own juice. Canned fruit may still be costly, but the shelf life of canned fruit is much longer than that of fresh fruit.

Frozen fruit may also be an option. Compare fresh strawberries at approximately \$2.50 per pound versus frozen strawberries at \$1.90 per pound.

Out of season fruits are usually more expensive, so try buying what is currently in season if you like to buy fresh fruit.

Remember frozen or canned vegetables are always another option that may cost less than fresh vegetables. Fresh green beans cost about \$1.99 per 16 ounces, where as a 16-ounce can of green beans costs about \$1.18. Frozen green beans are an even better bargain at about \$0.75 per 16 ounces.

You can always freeze meat, so buying in bulk can save you quite a bit of cash. A family pack of 93/7 ground beef cost about \$2.75 per pound versus 93/7 ground beef sold in one pound packages at about \$3.59.

Occasionally, substitute beans in place of meat in dishes. This will add protein to your diet without breaking the bank. A 15.5 ounce can of pinto beans is about \$0.65 and they are high in fiber and delicious.

Buy meat such as canned salmon or tuna. One pound of canned tuna is about \$2.85.

Planning ahead may also save you time and money. Shoppers who bring a grocery list to the store tend to have fewer problems with impulsive purchases.

Clip those coupons. Many of us don't always take the time to clip coupons, but getting coupons today is easier than ever with Web sites devoted to coupon clippers.

Look at the top racks and bottom racks of the grocery store. Sometimes more costly items are showcased at eye level.

Try farmer's markets for fresh produce. This cuts out the middle man, resulting to lower prices.

If you are lucky enough to have commissary privileges, you are already saving money.

Don't get me wrong, fresh food is great, but when you are on a budget, these tips may help you find a balance between your family's finances and nutrition.

If you are interested in learning more about nutrition, please attend the Semper Fit Health Promotion Education Workshop. This class is open to all Department of Defense identification card holders. Call 451-2865 for upcoming workshop dates and to register for the class. Limited seats are available.