

Living on WELL Street Blog: **EAT HEALTHY ON A BUDGET**

By Kim Ramos, WELL Street Partners

“The only way to keep your health is to eat what you don’t want, drink what you don’t like, and do what you’d rather not.” – Mark Twain

I occasionally hear the complaint that healthy foods are more expensive than ready-made, packaged items or fast foods. Research by the [Harvard School of Public Health](#) concludes that diets high in fruits, vegetables, fish and nuts cost on average, about \$1.50 more per day than less healthy diets – processed foods, meats and refined grains. How many of us waste \$1.50 or more on foods or drinks that are NOT healthy for us? Energy drinks, soda, coffee beverages, alcohol, candy or chips? Take an honest look at your spending on those items. Are you willing to cut back on or cut out these purchases?

Next, consider these cost-saving tips:

- **Take time to plan.** Organize a menu, make a shopping list and consult the sale flyers! Check out the free app ***Food on the Table*** that helps make shopping lists from recipes and compares prices of items at your favorite stores. The ***Our Groceries*** app allows the entire family to make grocery lists and update in real time. Or, check out [My Food Advisor](#) for healthy, delicious, budget-friendly recipes that feed a family of 4 for \$10 or less.
- **Look at the cost per unit price.** Sometimes the sale price on smaller items is cheaper than the larger container.
 - Buy in bulk only if you will eat it all, or have time to prepare and freeze for later use.
 - Make your own oatmeal varieties by buying in bulk and adding chopped apples, cinnamon, blueberries, peanut butter, chopped nuts, and ground flax meal for a nutritionally power-packed breakfast!
 - Purchase meat on sale in large quantities and divide at home in freezer bags for meal-sized servings.
 - When rotisserie chickens are on sale, buy two—this can become 4-5 meals. Serve roasted chicken one night. Pick the meat off and add to salads, make sandwich wraps, or mix with pasta or other grains. Save both carcasses and put in a pot with water to cover, and onion, carrot and celery. Simmer about 4 hours until the stock has been reduced. Strain and use as a base for soups, or to cook more flavorful grains.
- **Bag your own snacks—don’t pay for convenience.** Measured serving sizes of nuts (1 ½ oz.), dried cereal, whole grain crackers, rice cake bites, pita chips, or vegetable chips – great to stash in the car, office drawer or purse.
 - Popcorn is a great snack—full of fiber, but bought in the microwave packages has added salt, fat and chemicals. Make your own microwave popcorn without oil, popped in a brown paper bag.
- **Purchase these healthy low cost foods.**
 - **Canned fish** – Get a healthy dose Omega-3’s from tuna (in water), salmon, sardines and anchovies. They are a great value and can be added to salads, sandwiches and pastas.

- **Beans and legumes** – A great source of protein and fiber. Dried beans and legumes are cheaper, but require more time to prepare. Canned beans are still inexpensive and quick to add to a variety of dishes but rinse first to reduce sodium.
- **Whole grains** – Whole grains provide energy as well as fiber, minerals and antioxidants. White rice is the cheapest, but shop around and try other whole grains – brown rice, wild rice blends, quinoa, faro, and barley.
- **Potatoes** – A good source of potassium and other vitamins and minerals. And, eat the skins they are rich in fiber! White and sweet potatoes are fairly inexpensive – eat both with skin scrubbed, steamed or baked in the microwave or oven with a little olive oil drizzled on top, salt, pepper and maybe a splash of balsamic vinegar.

You CAN eat healthy on a budget!

SHOP SMART and EAT WELL,

Kim

Kim Ramos is a WELL Street Partner, Registered Nurse, Certified Health Coach and experienced worksite wellness program coordinator. She lives with her husband and three teens in Glenview, IL. She is passionate about living life to the fullest, and does this with compassion for others, curiosity and a love of learning, mindfulness and gratitude. She's a healthy foodie who enjoys cooking for herself and others, runs for stress relief and delights in gardening, knitting, crafting and quilting as hobbies. Contact Kim at kimramos@wellstreetpartners.com.