

Plan to Eat Healthy and Save Money

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Do not allow this economic *slowdown* to slow you down. This is not the time to wander aimlessly while you are driving a car or pushing a grocery cart. The price of “fuel” at the gas pump coupled with increasing “food fuel” costs at the grocery store are reasons to reassess and create new, strategic plans that include a majority of meals prepared at home.

Cook at Home

It certainly helps to have a “cook” as a resource. Learning to cook more healthfully at home may be an option worth serious consideration. Eating out can be a big budget buster. The cost of “fast food” can add up quickly. Meals made at home are usually lower in fat and calories. Check out “beginner” cookbooks at the public library or scour the web for simple recipes for starters. Major grocery chains have web sites with recipe files and demonstration videos to learn cooking techniques. WCET also has cooking shows to record. Ellie Krieger is a Registered Dietitian and Chef to learn from at www.elliekrieger.com

Discuss Changes

Next discuss changes with all members of the household. Ask for ideas for favorite meals and healthy snack preferences. It is important to consider every family member's nutrition needs. The U.S. Department of Labor statistics indicate the average family of four spends \$8513 per year on groceries. That is over \$700 a month and doesn't count meals eaten away from home. When spending this amount of money, it may be worth it to trade babysitting time with a friend or neighbor. Toddlers are easily stimulated by the “goodies” in the grocery store.

Shop with a List

Using a list *and sticking to it* can cut down on impulse buys and extra trips to the store. The Organized Home website at www.organizedhome.com has very basic templates for monthly meal plans, weekly meal plans, grocery, pantry and refrigerator, and freezer lists. Successful “weight managers” plan to eat breakfast every day. They also plan and pack both home-made lunches and snacks.

Map Out the Course

Ask for a map or “floor plan” at the service

desk for your local grocery stores. As a rule “shopping the perimeter” gives the most nutrition bang for the buck. Fresh produce, deli, fish, poultry, meats and dairy cases line the outer edge in the majority of stores. Mapping out a plan to shop several stores close in proximity may be worth considering. Some consumers find it helpful to keep coolers in the trunk to keep cold foods safe.

Check-out Store Brands or Buy Generic

Private label or store brands are usually less expensive than national brands. The taste may even match or exceed that of the national brand. Generic items are usually less costly and are great for casseroles, soups, stews and as frozen foods. Be sure to check the “unit price” when comparison shopping. “Unit prices” are part of the tag on the grocery store shelf.

Plan to Use Coupons

Coupons used to be found in the Wednesday Food Section of the local newspaper and in the weekly store “flyer.” Now coupons are generally in the Sunday paper. All store specials can be “pre-checked” on the internet via store web sites. Some stores have coupons through www.coupons.com, and they have coupons “attached” to recipes in their recipe files. Finding these coupons then downloading them on the store’s reward card can require some technical savvy. Check www.kroger.com, www.meijer.com, or www.remkes.com to start exploring. Sign up for newsletters online for Trader Joe’s and Whole Foods Market to get ideas for healthy menus. Treat coupons for nutritious items like cash. Be sure to bring them with the list!

Shop Local/In Season

Planting a personal vegetable and herb garden is a time consuming yet satisfying hobby. If this is not an option, visit local u-pick farms, farmer’s markets and stock up on foods in season. Check www.eatlocalcorv.org for information about all the farms and markets in the region. Be prepared to alter your list to accommodate as much fresh produce as possible.

Weigh Buying in Bulk

Purchase staples in bulk and mark the date of purchase on the container. Items like dried beans, peas, lentils, rice and grains may be great to purchase to start a neighborhood co-op. Stocking up on “bargains” that may

become temptations (baking mixes come to mind) is a personal consideration.

Exercise Options

Check-out exercise videos at the library. Inflate the tires on the bike and take it for a spin. Clip on a pedometer and take a walk in the park or wear it while pushing that grocery cart. Keep moving and eating healthfully. While the “focus” of this article has been about planning better ways to spend dollars, let this recession lead to a smaller waist circumference and lower BMI.

Check www.NutritionSOS.com for a coupon for upcoming classes. Please call or email to inquire about “Menu Planning” Services by a Registered Dietitian to assist with healthy meal plans.

Susan Deye, R.D.,L.D., with Personal NEWtrition, can be reached at susan@personalnewtrition.com 513-661-6391. As a Registered Dietitian, Susan uses her knowledge of nutrition to design a custom nutrition plan just for you!



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