

MINUTE NUTRITION NEWS

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Buying Healthy Foods – Is It As Expensive As It Seems?

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“It is expensive to eat healthy foods.” Is this something you have thought about before? How much are you spending each month on food? According to York Region’s Nutritious Food Basket survey in 2013, a single man between 31-50 years of age needs to spend about \$281.62 per month on basic nutritious foods. This does not include other convenience foods, eating out, or basic household items like toilet paper. Throw in other expenses like rent and gas, and there may not be much left from your monthly paychecks.

However, do the less healthier, processed foods actually cost any less? When you compare prices in the grocery stores, the *unit* price of unprocessed items are almost always cheaper. Take oatmeal for example. For about \$2.50, you can buy a 1kg (or 1000g) bag of plain oats or a 430g box of packaged instant flavoured oatmeal. For each *unit* or *gram* of oatmeal you are buying, the cost is almost doubled in the processed version. Furthermore, the high sugar, sodium and fat content in processed foods can contribute to chronic diseases which uses up your money on medications and higher tax dollars for healthcare in the long run.



So how can you stretch your dollars a little farther without compromising the nutritional quality of your diet? Get started with the tips below.

Four Ways to Stretch Your Food Dollars

1. Buy long-lasting grain products in bulk or family size packages. Buying more often means saving more, so get your staples of rice, pasta, oatmeal in the largest package possible. These staples can keep for up to a year. Choose plain over flavoured options – less processed usually means lower cost. Brown rice, barley and oats are also high in fibre meaning they can fill you up with a smaller amount of food. Substitute expensive sandwiches at lunch time with leftover rice and pasta from the night before.



2. Buy commonly-used veggies in bulk and look for other varieties in the reduced section. Buy large bags of onions, potatoes and carrots to use in most of your recipes. Onions and potatoes can keep for up to 2 months when stored in a dark, dry place, but store them away from each other because onions give off a gas that can spoil the potatoes. Carrots can keep for several weeks in the fridge. Buy other more expensive vegetables as you need them, and check the reduced price section first. Frozen varieties may be cheaper than the fresh when not in season.

3. Try skim milk powder instead of fluid milk. Dilute with water and drink like fluid milk. If you don’t like the texture, then add the powder to oatmeal, casseroles, pancakes, soups and even homemade pudding. Stock up when the powder form is on sale because an unopened bag can keep for up to one year.

4. Try vegetarian sources of protein. The cost of fresh or processed meat probably make up most of your grocery bills. Replace the meat in some of your meals with canned fish or vegetarian protein sources. Use canned fish in wraps and casseroles. Use canned or dried beans and lentils in soups, stew and salads. Add tofu in stir-fries and casseroles. Keep an eye out for vegetarian recipes to get inspired!



RECIPE OF THE MONTH

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Mediterranean Vegetable Curry

This flavourful recipe is made up of cost-friendly and versatile ingredients. You can adapt some of the vegetables to the types that you have at home or sale items of the week.

Makes 2 servings (1 serving = 2 cups)



Ingredients:

½ tbsp	olive oil
½	onion, diced
1 clove	garlic, diced
1 stalks	celery, chopped
1	carrot, chopped
½	zucchini, chopped
½	sweet potato, peeled and diced
3 tsp	curry powder
1 tsp	cumin
1 cup	canned diced tomatoes with juice, no salt added
¾ cup	lentils, cooked
¾ cup	pearl barley, cooked
½ cup	light coconut milk
3/16 tsp	salt

Directions:

1. Heat olive oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add onion, garlic, celery, and carrots to pot and cook until vegetables soften (about 5 minutes).
2. Add zucchini and sweet potato and cook (about 3 minutes).
3. Sprinkle in curry powder and cumin and stir until evenly incorporated.
4. Add tomatoes, lentils, barley, and coconut milk and stir. Cover, reduce heat to medium-low, and cook until sweet potatoes are soft (about 15 minutes).
5. Season with salt.

Nutrition information (per serving): 311 calories, Fat 10g (16% DV), Carbohydrate 49g (% DV), Protein 11g, Sodium 457mg (19% DV), Fibre 9g (37% DV), Sugar 11g, Calcium 103mg (9% DV)