

## **Healthy eating....affordably**

Do you have an empty purse and an empty stomach? Many people have the common misconception that eating healthily is expensive and that it stretches the food budget. However, including lots of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, lean meat and low-fat dairy products can be done economically. Here are a few easy hints to save rands on your food purchases and stay healthy:

### **Supermarket savvy**

- Make a shopping list before you go shopping and stick to it - avoid impulse buying.
- Plan a week's menu in advance and buy accordingly so that you can take advantage of weekly specials and avoid including extras.
- Buy at shops with reasonable prices and scan the local newspapers for specials.
- Take your calculator with you on your shopping trip, to help you stick to your budget.
- Compare prices and quality – remember that no-name brands and buying items in 'big sizes' are not necessarily cheaper. Scan the supermarket shelves as the more expensive items are usually placed at eye level. Shopping on a budget usually means having to stretch and bend!
- Make sure you have had a meal or healthy snack before you go shopping. On an empty stomach you may be tempted to buy unnecessary luxuries.

### **Grains and cereals**

- Buy porridges that you can cook, unrefined, wholegrain breakfast cereals and breads – they have a higher satiety value, so are better value for money.
- Avoid luxuries like cake, biscuits, rusks and potato chips.
- Somp, corn, rice and pearled wheat are often cheaper than pasta.
- Barley, rice, dried beans, peas and lentils add fibre and are good additions to stretch meals like soups, stews and casseroles.

### **Vegetables and fruit**

- Grow your own herbs and vegetables. Eat more vegetables if fruit is expensive.
- Buy vegetables and fruit that are in abundance (in season). Pumpkin, potatoes, cabbage and carrots are good value for money.
- Buy vegetables and fruit in bulk from a fresh produce market and share with friends or family – that way you will all save. Onions, potatoes, butternut and gem squash are cheaper by the pocket and tomatoes by the box. If you buy in bulk, you could also blanch and freeze vegetables to make them last longer.
- Fresh vegetables and fruit are generally less expensive than frozen and canned varieties.
- Self-selection of vegetables and fruit is cheaper per kilogram than buying pre-packaged ones.
- Retain maximal nutritional value of vegetables by peeling them very thinly with a vegetable peeler. Use vegetable leaves and skin with onions and potatoes in soups or stews. Left-over or wilted vegetables can also be added to soups.

### **Dairy**

- Milk sold in sachets is generally cheaper than those packaged in plastic bottles or cartons.
- Use skim-milk powder instead of coffee creamers, tea whiteners or milk blends.
- Cheaper substitutes like low fat or fat-free cottage cheese can be used instead of more expensive ingredients like ricotta cheese.
- Use less cheese in cooking by using a little mustard or cayenne pepper.

### **Protein**

- Compare prices - frozen fish may be cheaper than fresh fish. Making your own fishcakes with pilchards can be very economical. Flake fish and extend it by making paella with rice and vegetables.
- Whole chicken is cheaper per kilogram – save by cutting them up into portions. (Remember to remove the skin and all excess fat!)

- Stretch extra-lean mince by using soya, beans, lentils, oat bran and/or vegetables. Legumes are an excellent source of protein and fibre. Learn to make breyani – one of the most tasty and economical meals you can make!
- Prepare stews from tough and more affordable cuts of meat. (By using moist cooking, these cuts will become more juicy and tender.)
- Restrict buying tinned meat and cold meats like polony or viennas – rather buy tinned fish or use left over chicken breast or lean roast meat for sandwiches.

#### **Fats**

- Opt for soft-tub margarine and use it sparingly on bread.
- Use only a little oil in the preparation of food. Onions need not be fried in oil – just soften in water and add other ingredients.

#### **A few more tips....**

Take time to plan your meals and grocery lists to see benefits in your nutrition and your pocket. Practise portion control and cook just enough for everyone – this will save your rands as well as help your waistline! Experiment with your cooking by using left-overs in other dishes. For more economical heart-healthy tips and recipe ideas, contact one of our registered dieticians at the Heart Mark Diet Line on 0860 223 222 or visit [www.heartfoundation.co.za](http://www.heartfoundation.co.za).

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