

# Healthy Meals on a Budget

Becky Ramsing, MPH, RD



UNIVERSITY OF  
**MARYLAND**  
EXTENSION  
*Solutions in your community*

*(Equal Opportunity employer and equal access programs)*

# Healthy Eating on a Budget

- Is it important?
- Is it possible?
- How do we do it?
  - Planning
  - Shopping
  - Cooking
- Resources



# Is a healthy diet important? YES!

- Healthy diet => Better overall health!
- Lower medical costs
- More energy, less sickness
- Less absence from work and school
- Lower risk of diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure
- Healthier weight





# Is it more expensive?

## IT DEPENDS!

- Junk food calories **are** cheaper, but...nutrients are **not**!
- Plain foods cost less; added ingredients increase price
- Planning meals and shopping with a list bring costs down



# Pre-prepared foods cost more



**1 peanut butter sandwich = 48¢**



**1-3 oz. Bag of RitsBits = 50¢**



# Added ingredients cost more

## Giant Rice Brown Long Grain

[Close Window](#)

Price: \$1.99

Size: 32 OZ BAG



## Uncle Ben's Ready Rice Butter & Garlic

[Close Window](#)

Price: \$2.39

Size: 8.8 OZ PKG



# Comparing Pizzas

**Amy's Personal  
Cheese Pizza (organic)**



(1 x 176g box)

**HealthCastle.com  
Healthy Pizza**



(whole wheat pita,  
tomato sauce, turkey,  
green pepper, and  
mozzarella cheese)

<b>Serving Size:</b>	Whole serving from the box (176 g)	One pita bread
<b>Calories:</b>	420 kcal	291 kcal
<b>Protein:</b>	18 g	19 g
<b>Fat:</b>	17 g	7.5 g
<b>Carbohydrate:</b>	49 g	39 g
<b>Fiber:</b>	3 g	7 g
<b>Trans Fat:</b>	0.2 g	0 g
<b>Sodium:</b>	720 mg (30% of daily limit for an adult)	809 mg (33% of daily limit for an adult)
<b>Iron:</b>	15% Daily Value	18% Daily Value
<b>Calcium:</b>	30% Daily Value	20% Daily Value
<b>Preparation time:</b>	23 minutes	20 minutes
<b>Price per serving:</b>	\$ 5.49	\$2.01



# 1 week of food for family of 4



**Choices make a difference!**

# Planning is Key

- Plan meals for the week ahead, so that you can...
  - Purchase only what you need
  - Stock up when staples are on sale
  - Use the same ingredients for more than one meal
  - Take advantage of sales
  - Clip coupons



# Getting Started

- Make a meal plan!
  - Ask your family what they like to eat and write down meals you will prepare
  - Include foods from all food groups in the Pyramid in your plan
  - Plan at least 4 meals for the week



# The Pyramid Messages



## Grains

Make half your grains whole

## Vegetables

Vary your veggies

## Fruits

Focus on fruits

## Milk

Get your calcium-rich foods

## Meat & Beans

Go lean with protein

Start smart with breakfast. Look for whole-grain cereals.

Just because bread is brown doesn't mean it's whole-grain. Search the ingredients list to make sure the first word is "whole" (like "whole wheat").

Color your plate with all kinds of great-tasting veggies.

What's green and orange and tastes good? Veggies! Go dark green with broccoli and spinach, or try orange ones like carrots and sweet potatoes.



Fruits are nature's treats — sweet and delicious. Go easy on juice and make sure it's 100%.

Move to the milk group to get your calcium. Calcium builds strong bones.

Look at the carton or container to make sure your milk, yogurt, or cheese is lowfat or fat-free.



Eat lean or lowfat meat, chicken, turkey, and fish. Ask for it baked, broiled, or grilled — not fried.

It's nutty, but true. Nuts, seeds, peas, and beans are all great sources of protein, too.

For an 1,800-calorie diet, you need the amounts below from each food group. To find the amounts that are right for you, go to [MyPyramid.gov](http://MyPyramid.gov).

Eat 6 oz. every day; at least half should be whole

Eat 2 1/2 cups every day

Eat 1 1/2 cups every day

Get 3 cups every day; for kids ages 2 to 8, it's 2 cups

Eat 5 oz. every day



**Oils** Oils are not a food group, but you need some for good health. Get your oils from fish, nuts, and liquid oils such as corn oil, soybean oil, and canola oil.

### Find your balance between food and fun

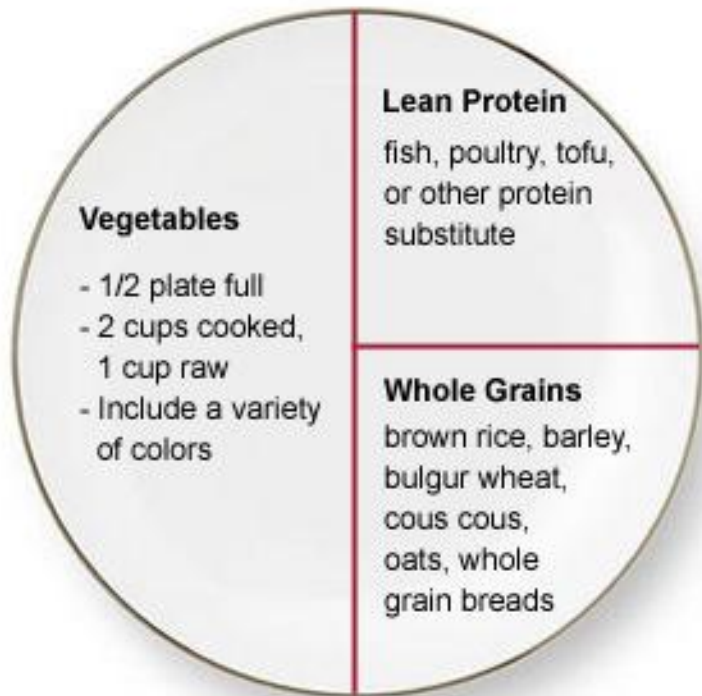
- Move more. Aim for at least 60 minutes everyday, or most days.
- Walk, dance, bike, rollerblade — it all counts. How great is that!



### Fats and sugars — know your limits

- Get your fat facts and sugar smarts from the Nutrition Facts label.
- Limit solid fats as well as foods that contain them.
- Choose food and beverages low in added sugars and other caloric sweeteners.

# The Plate Model



# Grains – Make half whole!

- Choose 100% whole wheat bread
- Choose whole grains
  - Brown rice, whole grain pasta, oats
- Substitute whole wheat flour in baking
- Avoid individual packages of cereals, oatmeal, cereal bars
- Take a look at the day old shelf



# Dairy – get calcium rich foods

- Choose fat free or 1% milk
- String cheese & tube yogurt cost more
- Eat yogurt for dessert - Add fresh or frozen fruit to plain yogurt
- Try low fat cheeses or cut usual portions in half
- Avoid processed cheeses



# Meats – go lean with protein

- Buy plain, not seasoned or processed
- Buy in bulk, portion & freeze
- Substitute beans, legumes, tofu –even nuts - a few nights a week
- Choose lean cuts of beef & pork
  - Chuck or bottom round
- More chicken (no skin) & fish



# Vary your Fruits & Vegetables

- Buy in season
- Frozen are just as nutritious – buy large bags, keep in freezer
- Fruits canned in own juice are OK
- Buy colorful! Try something new!
- Pre-cut and washed increase price and decrease nutritional value
- 100% juice OK



# Is Organic worth the cost?

**SHOPPER'S GUIDE TO PESTICIDES**

**DIRTY DOZEN**  
*Buy These Organic*

**CLEAN 15**  
*Lowest in Pesticides*

<b>WORST</b>	1 Peach	<b>BEST</b>	1 Onion
	2 Apple		2 Avocado
	3 Bell Pepper		3 Sweet Corn
	4 Celery		4 Pineapple
	5 Nectarine		5 Mango
	6 Strawberries		6 Asparagus
	7 Cherries		7 Sweet Peas
	8 Kale		8 Kiwi
	9 Lettuce		9 Cabbage
	10 Grapes (Imported)		10 Eggplant
	11 Carrot		11 Papaya
	12 Pear		12 Watermelon
			13 Broccoli
			14 Tomato
			15 Sweet Potato

 ENVIRONMENTAL WORKING GROUP  
[www.foodnews.org](http://www.foodnews.org)



# Limit added fats

- Choose healthy oils, such as canola and olive oil, other vegetable oils
- Avoid trans fats (found in processed foods)
- Limit solid fats and animal fats
- Buy margarine or butter in a tub
- Avoid fried foods and snacks



# Limit added sugar

- Beverages account for more than half of our sugar, and add cost
- Foods with extra sugar add empty calories and cost extra



# Low-cost, healthy snacks

- Many snack foods are high in calories, fat, salt and/or sugar but also expensive!
  - especially individual packages
- Try popcorn, pretzels, low fat crackers, fruits or raw vegetables
- Plan snacks along with meals
  - Be creative!
- Eat snacks at the table



# Quick meal ideas

- Grilled chicken breast (on grill) with couscous (microwave) and pre-washed salad
- Spaghetti in canned tomato sauce with turkey meatballs (stove top)
- Broiled lemon pepper fish, brown rice, steamed veggies (stove top)
- Whole wheat tortillas with refried beans, added veggies, and salsa (avoid the sour cream and extra cheese!)



# REALLY quick meals!

- Canned chili over a baked potato (microwave) – add some frozen broccoli & a sprinkle of cheese!
- Low sodium canned soup – add extra frozen vegetables or beans
- Veggie burgers with frozen corn, canned black beans and salsa



# A little preparation makes meals easier!

- When you have a little more time:
  - Cook extra
  - Freeze leftovers
- Prepare parts of meal ahead of time
  - Wash and cut up vegetables
  - Cook rice or noodles
  - Cook meat
- Cook once for everyone!



# Stock up on healthy foods

- Having ingredients on hand will help you make quick meals and avoid fast food or pizza orders!
- Buy in bulk, separate, & freeze
- Canned tuna, tomatoes, beans are good to have on hand
- Frozen fruit & vegetables



# Cabinet Must-Haves

- Canned tomatoes
- Canned and/or dried beans
- Canned broth
- Canned vegetables
- Tuna fish
- Canned and dried fruit
- Applesauce
- Natural peanut butter
- Olive and/or canola oil
- Non-stick spray
- Onions
- Brown rice & other grains (couscous, cornmeal, bulgur)
- Pasta – whole grain
- Whole grain pancake mix
- Whole wheat flour
- Evaporated milk
- Herbs, seasonings
- Vinegars
- Sauces



# Refrigerator Must-Haves

- Fresh fruit and vegetables
- Bag salad
- Cut, raw veggies
- Light yogurt
- Skim or 1% milk
- Eggs
- Sliced turkey or pre-cooked chicken
- Minced garlic
- Reduced fat salad dressing or mayo
- Reduced fat cheese
- Parmesan cheese
- Lemon or lime juice
- Salsa
- Spicy mustard
- 100% fruit juice
- Whole grain tortillas
- Soy sauce, Worcestershire, etc.



# Freezer Must-Haves

- Frozen vegetables and fruits (plain)
- Boneless chicken breasts
- Lean ground turkey, beef, chicken
- Whole grain breads, bagels, English muffins, pitas
- Frozen, chopped bell peppers
- Frozen fish
- Pizza crusts
- Pre-made soups, stews, casseroles
- Nuts



# Shopping can be confusing!



# Make your list

- Check your refrigerator and pantry
  - What do you have?
  - What do you need?
- Make a list!
  - Do you need to go to more than one store?
  - Try making the list in the order in which you will find them in the store
  - Do you have coupons?



# Shopping Tips

- Follow your list!
- Buy store brands
- Buy fruits & vegetables in season
- Buy in bulk or large portions
- Compare unit prices
- Look for day old bakery items



# Do's & Don'ts

- DON'T shop hungry
- DO Shop the outside areas of the store  
– the pre-packaged foods are in the middle!
- DO shop with kids only if you have a list they can help you with



# Compare labels & prices

- Compare labels of similar items
  - Grams of fat & saturated fat (less!)
  - Trans-fat (avoid!)
  - Grams of sugar (less!)
  - Grams of fiber (more!)
- Look at unit price



# Chicken Noodle Soup

## Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1/2 cup (120 ml) condensed soup  
 Servings Per Container about 2.5

Amount Per Serving

**Calories** 60      **Calories from Fat** 15

**% Daily Value\***

**Total Fat** 1.5g      **2%**

Saturated Fat 0.5g      **3%**

Trans Fat 0g

**Cholesterol** 15mg

**Sodium** 890gm      **37%**

**Total Carbohydrate** 8g      **3%**

Dietary Fiber 1g      **4%**

Sugars 1g

**Protein** 3g

**Vitamin A** 4%      **Calcium** 0%

**Vitamin C** 0%      **Iron** 2%

\*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.  
 Your Daily Values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.

	Calories	2000	2500
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g
Sat Fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400m	2400mg
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g

Less: Total fat, saturated fat, trans fat

Less sodium

More fiber, less sugar

The Food Label



# Finding the Unit Price

- Unit price = package price divided by number of units
- Some stores have it listed on shelf
- Make sure you compare the same unit

**Example** – Notice in the example below that the unit price for both cans of soup is the same, therefore the shopper is not saving by buying the larger size.

	Item price	Unit price
Mushroom soup - 16 oz.	\$1.39	\$.09
Mushroom soup - 19 oz.	\$1.69	\$.09



# Shopping wholesale, discount markets, and sales

- DON'T get tempted by great deals on things you wouldn't normally purchase
- DO compare prices – things do not always cost less!
- DON'T be fooled by big displays!



# Making it work for your family

- Try to eat at the same time every day
- Sit down with family to eat
- Serve a variety of healthy foods and let kids choose what they eat at table



- Involve kids in process of cooking & shopping
- Have all food ready when you sit down
- Be a role model

# Involve your kids as you cook

- Kids can:
  - Measure
  - Set the table
  - Pour milk
  - Help stir
  - Pick what goes into a salad
  - Pick a new food to try
  - Help with food preparation



# Eating out on a low budget?

- Save money and calories by asking for water and not ordering drinks
- Split a meal or choose an appetizer
- Have dessert at home
- Make it count, relax & enjoy the time
- Take out may also cost less



# Resources on the Web

- My Pyramid Menu Tracker
  - <http://www.mypyramidtracker.gov/planner/index.aspx>
- Cooking with kids (USDA)
  - <http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov> (select “Recipe and Menu Planning” on left)
- SNAP-Ed: information on healthy eating, using food dollar wisely, and low cost recipes
  - <http://snap.nal.usda.gov>
- Internet recipes
  - [www.fruitsandveggiemorematters.com](http://www.fruitsandveggiemorematters.com)
  - [www.minutemeals.com](http://www.minutemeals.com)



# Conclusion



- Eating a healthy diet does not have to be expensive
- A little time planning goes a long way
- Healthy eating can be enjoyable and tasty!
  - Be creative; enjoy the process
- The long term effects are worth it