

A Healthy Path Through Today's Supermarket

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- Do you know how to choose the most nutritious food available and still keep within your food budget?
- Do you ever go to the market for bread and milk and come out spending more than \$50?
- Do you sometimes return home with damaged or unsafe food products from your market?

If these questions cause you concern, it's time to take stock of your shopping habits and develop a healthy path through today's supermarket.

Take Stock Before You Shop

Preplanning makes all the difference in successful shopping. Save time and dollars by incorporating the following guidelines.

- Make a list. Begin your list during the week as you run out of items. Consider your family's activity schedule, current health concerns, and any other factors that impact your weekly meal planning.
- Consider listing foods by categories based on the Food Guide Pyramid food groups. This ensures that your meals include a mix of healthful foods.
- The best time to shop is when you have time. Plan ahead to allow yourself opportunity to make the wisest selections. Don't forget to eat before shopping. This reduces impulse buying caused by hunger.
- Scan newspapers and online advertisements for food on sale. Keep a list of items you regularly buy and compare prices.
- Organize coupons before you leave home and use them for items you ordinarily purchase.
- Pack your vehicle with aids that will protect purchases until you get them home. Include a cooler and ice pack to keep items out of the temperature danger zone. Boxes and baskets keep purchased items in the upright position and less likely to spill.

Take Control Once You Arrive

Once you arrive at the store, beware of foods on every aisle that can tempt you to stray from your list of healthful choices.

- Stay strong. Breathe deeply and forge ahead to make the wisest consumer choices.
- Be aware of supermarket displays at the end of the aisles – they are not always bargains.
- Commit to choosing healthful food. Take time to read the food labels as you shop to help you choose food lower in fat, salt, and sugar and higher in fiber.
- Think food safety; pick up meats, milk, and frozen foods last. Slip a plastic bag around meat to catch drips. Keep meats away from other items in your cart.



To eat more grain products, vegetables, and fruits, buy:

- Breads and cereals, including whole-grain products.
- Dry, canned, or frozen peas and beans.
- Pasta, noodles, rice, and other grain products.
- Fruits and vegetables, including those with edible skins.

Choose foods lower in fat by buying:

- Lean meat. Look for the words "round" or "loin" on beef and "loin" on pork.
- Chicken and turkey without the skin.
- Canned fish packed in water instead of oil.
- Fat-free or low-fat milk and low-fat or nonfat dairy products.

To choose foods lower in salt, buy:

- Plain frozen, fresh, or canned no-salt-added vegetables instead of regular canned or frozen ones with sauces or seasonings.
- Fresh or frozen lean meats, chicken, and turkey.
- Fewer processed meats like hot dogs, sausages, and lunch meats (choose ones that list “low” or “reduced” sodium on the package).
- Fewer salty snack foods like crackers and chips (choose ones that have “no salt added” on the package label).

Choose foods lower in sugar by buying:

- Fresh fruit or fruit canned in juice or light syrup.
- Fewer sodas, cakes, cookies, and candies.
- Breakfast cereals without sugar coatings or added sweets.

Organize Once You Return Home

- Quickly store raw meat, poultry, and seafood separately from other foods in your refrigerator in the meat compartment or on the lowest shelf below any ready-to-eat foods or foods that will not be cooked.
- Check supermarket receipts for errors due to double scanning, missed coupons, or document errors. Contact your store immediately to receive credit.
- Develop a shopping file. Organize store coupons. List items that worked well in your family meal planning and don't forget to also list items that were not successful.

Suggestion

Make a grocery list using the Food Guide Pyramid.

Sources

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