

Nutrition and Dietetics

Eating Well for Less



This booklet will help you make the most out of the food you have, and support you to eat well on a limited budget.

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The 'Eat Well' plate

A healthy diet includes choosing a wide variety of foods from five different food groups. The balance of good health, shown below, displays these five food groups and the amounts needed for a healthy, balanced diet.

The eatwell plate

Use the eatwell plate to help you get the balance right. It shows how much of what you eat should come from each food group.

Fruit and vegetables

Bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and other starchy foods

Meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein

Foods and drinks high in fat and/or sugar

Milk and dairy foods

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Cutting the cost of eating well

- Don't shop when you are hungry as you tend to buy more.
- Make a shopping list and stick to it. Buy the essential items first, or common foods you eat and make a weekly meal plan.
- Try supermarket own brand products, take advantage of special offers and try markets at closing time.
- Look out for food coupons and money-off vouchers.
- Shopping in bulk tends to be cheaper, maybe shop with a friend.
- Shop at the end of the day to get the best deals.
- 'One pot' meals such as casseroles, stews and soups, are quick, cheap and easy to make. Cook them on a ring on the hob on a low heat instead of the oven.
- Packet sauces can provide the basis for many meals and will be cheaper than buying the individual ingredients. Try pasta in tomato sauce or fish in parsley or cheese sauce.
- Buy fruit and vegetables from the market or the value range in the supermarket.
- Buy fruit and vegetables in season e.g. Brussel sprouts, carrots and swede in winter, and salad vegetables in summer.
- Have some fruit and vegetables as healthy snacks, instead of sweets and chocolate.

Bread, cereals, potatoes, rice and pasta

(Also includes chapattis, yams and plantain).

Try to include these at every meal and try not to add extra fat during cooking or at the table. Also include some high fibre varieties, for example wholemeal bread and breakfast cereals such as Weetabix, Shredded Wheat or Bran Flakes.

To save money buy from supermarket own brand or value ranges or buy unwashed potatoes in larger bags from a market.

Fruit and vegetables

Fresh, frozen, tinned, juices and dried types all count. Frozen or tinned varieties, or fresh fruit and vegetables in season will be cheaper.

You should try to include at least five portions of fruit or vegetables a day.

A portion is:

- Two tablespoons of vegetables or a dessert bowl of salad
- A medium sized piece of fruit (e.g. apple)
- Two small pieces of fruit (e.g. plums)
- A glass of fruit juice.

Meat, fish and alternatives

Tinned meat and fish are cheaper alternatives to fresh varieties. There are also tinned meals available such as ready-made stews and curries.

Try to avoid buying meat that is high in fat such as burgers and sausages, always choose meat that has the lowest fat content.

Instead of meat, cheaper protein sources such as beans, peas and lentils can be used to bulk out stews, casseroles, curries and chillies. Eggs are also a good protein source instead of meat.

Meat, fish and alternatives continued

Add a can of beans or a handful of red lentils to a meat dish to make it go further. You then need less meat and it is just as nutritious, for example, add a can of chick peas to a curry.

Baked beans are full of protein and fibre, you could add a can to a meat dish such as shepherd's pie to make it go further.

Milk and dairy foods

Include some milk and dairy foods in your diet everyday. You could replace mild cheese in recipes for a stronger tasting one which means you will need less to get the same flavour. Choose a margarine which is high in monounsaturated fat, such as the supermarket's own olive or vegetable oil spreads and use UHT milk for cooking.

If you are on a diet, choose low fat milk and dairy foods such as skimmed milk and low fat yoghurts.

Foods containing fat and sugar

Choose these less often and have smaller amounts. Many of these foods are also more expensive. Buy less fizzy pop, sweets and crisps– try reducing the amount by half or a third. You could also buy plain biscuits and have crumpets, scones, teacakes or toast and jam as an alternative to cakes or chocolate.

Quick, healthy snacks to feed hungry children

- Toast or bread with jam, peanut butter or Marmite.
- Crumpets with margarine and jam– serve with cheese for a snack meal.
- Cereals and milk.

Store cupboard essentials

Always keep a back up supply of tinned and packet foods for emergencies. A few suggestions are as follows:

Food Type	Example
Milk	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dried/UHT (long life)
Meat, fish and alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tinned corned beef, ham, mince• Tinned meals e.g. stews, sausage and beans, ravioli, macaroni cheese• Tinned sardines, tuna, pilchards• Tinned baked beans
Vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Frozen peas, carrots, mixed vegetables• Tinned sweetcorn, tomatoes, peas• Packet or tinned soups
Fruit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dried raisins or apricots• Tinned peaches in natural juice• UHT (long life) fruit juices
Cereals and alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High fibre breakfast cereals (e.g. Weetabix, porridge oats)• Crackers and packet biscuits• Dried instant potato
Miscellaneous	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Peanut butter• Marmite, Bovril• Tea and coffee

Five a day for less

Fruit/ vegetable	Cost
3tbsp of frozen peas	Value range 8p
3tbsp of tinned carrots in water	Value range 9p
Apple	22p
Banana	25p
Handful of raisins	4p

Here are some other ideas (supermarket value ranges):

3tbsp tinned peaches in juice	22p
3tbsp tinned pineapple in juice	25p
Half a tin of sweetcorn in water	15p
Handful of lettuce	12p
One tomato	20p
3 inches of cucumber	10p
Three broccoli florets	18p
3 tbsp frozen mixed vegetables	11p

Food safety

- Always store raw and cooked foods separately. Defrost meat and fish thoroughly before cooking. Cooked food must be STORED CHILLED and only be REHEATED ONCE and food MUST be heated thoroughly.
- Check the use-by date of foods you are eating.
- Children and adults should wash their hands before and after preparing and eating food.
- Storing food in sealed containers will keep it fresh for longer. Saucepans and boxes with lids are also useful.
- If you do not have a fridge, buy non perishables like tinned food or dried food.
- If you do not have much storage space, buy smaller amounts of food so that it does not go bad. Avoid storing food on or near the floor.
- Cool leftovers as quickly as possible (within 90 minutes) and store them in the fridge, eat them within two days.

If you are concerned about your diet or have any queries regarding this advice please contact a dietitian at Bedford Hospital on 01234 792171 or via email: Dietetics@bedfordhospital.nhs.uk