

Healthful Eating with Nonperishable Foods

We often are told that healthful eating is complicated and expensive. The opposite is true! With preplanning, you can eat healthfully and enjoyably and save money, time and effort. With the COVID 19 precautions, shelf stable and nonperishable foods are more important than ever to save trips to the grocery store and reduce exposure to illness.

- 1. A little planning goes a long way** -Plan and shop for a 1-2 weeks' worth of meals at a time. Convenience foods can be healthful and save time. Examples are frozen vegetables, ready to heat and eat brown rice, ready-made pizza crust, tomato sauce, shredded cheese, and prewashed bagged salads. Canned vegetable, minestrone, or other soups can be enhanced by adding shredded cabbage, carrots, frozen vegetables, rinsed/drained canned beans and/ or mushrooms and extra water to dilute the sodium content to make more servings – a “semi homemade” soup.
- 2. Get the right price at the grocery store** -Buy fresh fruits and vegetables when they're in season—they're likely to cost less. Frozen vegetables are picked at the peak of ripeness and are cheaper, too. Stock up on canned beans, canned vegetables (lower sodium varieties are available), whole grain breads and tortillas that can be kept in the freezer.
- 3. Use simpler “packaged” foods** -Make your own popcorn (a whole grain) in place of potato chips, buy fresh or dried fruits and nuts instead of packaged snacks, and old-fashioned oatmeal to replace high priced cold cereals. Dress up oatmeal with chopped nuts, fruit, spices, canned pumpkin, and sweetener of choice. Add yogurt or peanut butter for extra flavor and nutrition.
- 4. Go slow ...or quick with helpful kitchen appliances**-Invest in a slow cooker, pressure cooker or insta-pot. These easy-to-use appliances make less expensive cuts of meat tender and tasty. Make large batches of main dishes and freeze for when you don't have time or energy to cook. Purchase storage containers or bags for freezing to maintain quality of your meals.
- 5. Switch up your plate** -Make vegetables (fresh, frozen, salad) your main dish, and serve meat as a smaller side dish along with a high fiber/whole grain side such as brown rice, beans or quinoa. You can also save money by buying whole roasting chickens and cutting them up yourself.
- 6. Don't be afraid of sandwiches**- A sandwich can be a healthful, quick, tasty meal. Use whole wheat, rye, sough dough bread for variety, fill with avocado, roasted peppers, lean meat, poultry or fish, and play with other spreads or condiments to perk up the taste. Pair with fresh fruit. Even a peanut butter sandwich with fruit spread, banana or a drizzle of honey can be a terrific option and save money as well.

Shopping list ideas:

- Old fashioned oatmeal
- Low sugar bran cereals
- Whole wheat, sourdough and rye bread
- Pasta- whole grain or regular
- Whole wheat tortillas
- Canned lower sodium chicken broth
- Canned evaporated milk
- Nuts and nut butters (all varieties; choose unsalted nuts such as walnuts, pecans, almonds, pine nuts, sunflower seeds, pistachios, peanuts)
- Dried fruits
- Canned beans
- Canned vegetables of all types. If you can't find lower sodium varieties, drain and rinse if you are trying to watch your sodium intake
- Frozen fruits and vegetables
- Frozen egg whites (useful for home made quiches, baked goods and cooking in general)
- Flavored oils for roasting, sautéing, salads
- Seasonings and spices
- Nutrition supplement drinks (such as Ensure or Boost) if appetite is poor and / or it's difficult to eat
- Popsicles, flavored waters, juices, ginger ale in case of sick days to maintain hydration