

Food Fact Sheet

EATING WELL WITH NO TIME AND NO MONEY

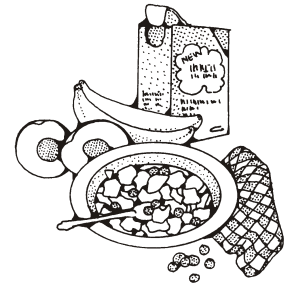
You probably have several “good” reasons for skipping meals. Perhaps the most common one is not having time to shop and prepare food.

As a result, you may resort to grabbing fast foods or hitting vending machines. But the truth is, fast foods and vending machine products are expensive, and generally aren't the healthiest choices either.

With just a bit of planning, anyone can make quick and easy meals and save money too.

What are some quick inexpensive breakfast ideas?

Breakfast is a good idea, because it really is an important start to your day. Make it portable. Stock up on convenient food items, ones you can grab and eat in the car, on public transportation, or just before work or class. See how many of these foods appeal to you:



- low-fat or nonfat yogurt (If you want less sugar, select one sweetened with fruit, fruit juice or aspartame.)
- string cheese or other low-fat cheeses
- fresh fruits (Buy in season; that's when fruit tastes the best and cost the least.)
- dried fruits, such as raisins, apricots or prunes
- low-fat or no-fat-added granola or other crunchy cereal (Carry in a plastic bag or covered cup and mix with yogurt.)
- bagels
- whole grain muffins
- “energy” bars (Check the label to make sure the bar provides enough food value and is low in fat and added sugar, such as sucrose, dextrose or corn syrup.)
- leftover pizza, particularly if it's vegetarian
- that last bit of tuna casserole, or some stir fry and rice from last night's dinner.

On days that you have a little time in the morning, you can eat well and really save some money on breakfast. You can make oatmeal or pancakes for less than 25 cents a serving. For a few cents more, you can prepare some brands of instant oatmeal in just 90 seconds.

Isn't it easier to buy lunch?

It may be less of a hassle to buy lunch, but food in a restaurant, cafeteria or vending machine will definitely cost more. One way to save money is to carry your lunch. Here are some ways to make it work:



1. **Prepare your lunch the night before** to save time in the morning. Any leftovers from supper can be packed up for lunch the next day.
2. **Invest in a good vacuum bottle** for carrying hot drinks and soups. Hot dishes or salads can be carried in a small, wide-mouth thermos. You'll save money in the long run.
3. **Think about bringing part of your meal.** For example, many cafeterias have hearty soups and bread for a reasonable price, but bringing your own fruit, beverage and dessert will let you save the difference in what the cafeteria charges for those items.

The last thing I want to do in the evening is think about making dinner. What can I do in 20 minutes?

While you may be tempted to order pizza again, or to open one of those boxed prepared meals where all you add is the meat, think again. The pizza route may be convenient, but it gets expensive when you resort to it too often. And prepackaged convenience foods are generally high in sodium and fat. They're also more expensive (and less tasty) than if you made the dish yourself. It's possible to prepare a healthy meal in under 20 minutes if you keep it simple.

Here's a basic plan:

- **Start with a starch serving** - instant rice or pasta, a tortilla, a potato or pizza crust.
- **Add any combination of** vegetables; low-fat cheese; a serving of meat, fish, poultry or beans; and/or a simple sauce.
- **Bake, broil or stir-fry** the combination you've chosen to keep it on the healthy side.
- **Round out the meal** with some bread, fruit or salad and a low-fat milk product.

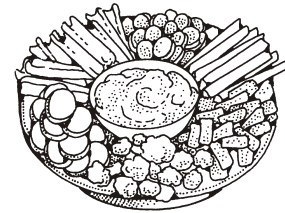
Tips for Saving Money When Shopping

Before you shop:

- Make a shopping list of the meals you've planned for the week.
- Check grocery ads for sales and/or clip coupons (for the foods you really need).
- Eat before you shop. Then you'll be less likely to buy on impulse.

BE PREPARED: Take some time on the weekends to plan menus. Shop and prepare larger portions of meals when you have time. You can:

- Make up a batch of pancakes. Put plastic wrap or wax paper between every 2 cakes and freeze in plastic bags. (An English muffin bag works well.) When you want pancakes, take out as many as you want and microwave them. You can do the same with waffles.
- Wash and cut up raw vegetables. Pat or spin dry, wrap in a plain paper towel and refrigerate in plastic bags or containers. They'll keep for several days. Choose vegetables such as broccoli, carrots, onions, mushrooms, celery and cauliflower. These can quickly and easily be turned into many different kinds of dishes – soups, casseroles, stir-fry, salads – by adding just a few other ingredients.
- Make up a bunch of low-fat vegetarian spaghetti sauce. Freeze in 1- or 2-person servings. Serve over pasta, baked potatoes, rice or spaghetti squash.



At the store:

- Compare brands by calculating the price per ounce. (Many stores provide a unit pricing index which gives a cost per serving and allows price comparisons at a glance.)
- Store brands usually cost less than name brands.
- Stick to your shopping list.
- Buy in bulk when you can – grains, granola, dried fruits.
- Select lean cuts of beef; they're lower in fat, higher in protein and less costly overall.
- Poultry is usually less expensive than red meat. It also contains fewer calories and less fat.
- Buy a whole chicken and cut it up. Trade a little time for a lot of money.
- Fruit juices are a better value than fruit drinks. Fruit drinks are mainly water with sugar, flavorings and vitamins added.
- Buy whole fruits or vegetables rather than juice. You'll get more nutrients and fiber, and you'll save money.
- Frozen yogurt and ice milk contain less fat and cost less than ice cream.
- Buy day-old bread and other baked goods. Freeze them for later.
- Pickles, olives and relishes may be nice extras but they're expensive and not nutritious.
- The color of egg shells makes no difference in food value. Buy whichever is least expensive.

Food Preparation and Storage Tips

- Use dried beans in place of meats, or cut meat in half by adding beans to the recipe.
- Prepare and freeze casseroles and sauces in advance.
- Use leftover vegetables and cooking liquid in soups and sauces.
- Instant non-fat milk is an inexpensive way to add milk to recipes.
- Keep fats and oils in the refrigerator to prevent spoiling.
- Reuse plastic bags, containers and foil.
- Keep margarine tubs for freezer containers.