



We Can! Parent Tips: Healthier Eating While Saving Money

Deciding which foods to serve your family each week can be hard, especially if you are on a tight budget. There are so many choices at the store that decisions are often based on what we see in front of us, rather than on a plan for making healthier choices. The **We Can!** program can help you plan your family meals before you go to the store.

Creating a healthier food plan depends on what foods are in season, what foods your family likes, and what foods you have at home already. You can also plan around sale items. Not only will you make more informed choices, but you may also be able to save money and time. Also, eating healthier foods in moderate portions and saving leftovers will help trim your budget and waistline by eating fewer calories at one time.

Ahead

\$ *Make a plan and stick to it.* With a little planning, you can get most of your groceries for the week in one trip, which will save a lot of time. And, the fewer trips to the store, the less likely you will be to buy unnecessary items. To help you plan, use the **We Can! Weekly Meal Planner** that can be found in the **We Can!** Resources on the Web site.

\$ *Review store ads and clip coupons for healthier items* such as skinless chicken breasts, lean cuts of meat or ground beef, fruit (fresh, frozen, or canned in its own juice), vegetables (fresh, frozen without added fat, or canned without added sodium), whole grain breads and cereals, and low fat or fat free milk and milk products.

\$ *Check your cupboards and refrigerator* for items that you can use and then plan to use them.

\$ *Check out heart healthy recipes* from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to help you plan your meals and shopping list at <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/index.htm#recipes>

\$ *To help you prepare your grocery list*, you can download the **We Can! Grocery List Template** and **My Shopping List** to help organize your weekly grocery shopping. Both can be found in **We Can!** Resources on the Web site.

\$ *Don't shop hungry.* If you shop when you are hungry, you are more likely to buy more than you need and possibly buy less healthy items that appeal to you at that moment.

\$ *Try to go grocery shopping without children.* Stores put foods that many children like such as candy and sugary cereal where they can see and reach them. These foods are often advertised with characters that appeal to children. If you must bring children, grocery shopping can be a great way to teach them about food and nutrition (and colors, math, reading!)

Grocery Shopping Tips

\$ *Sign up for your grocer's bonus/discount card* for additional savings.

\$ *Try store brands.* The most costly brands are typically placed at eye level. Store brands that may be cheaper and are just as good are often placed higher or lower on the shelf.

\$ *Comparison shop for healthier brands.* Read the Nutrition Facts Label. Learn how to find serving sizes and the per serving amounts of calories, fat, saturated fat, *trans* fat, sodium, sugars, protein, fiber, and vitamins and minerals. For more information on the Nutrition Facts Label, check out the Live It section of the **We Can!** Web site.





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- \$ *Use the unit price and the Nutrition Facts Label to compare similar foods.* The unit price tells you the cost per ounce, pound, or pint, so you'll know which brand and size are best to buy. Look for it on the shelf sticker below the product. Then, read the Nutrition Facts Label to be sure that you are getting the healthiest option at the lowest cost. Click on these Food Label resources from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA): <http://www.csfan.fda.gov/~ear/hwm/labelman.html> and <http://www.csfan.fda.gov/~acrobat/nutractds.pdf>.
- \$ *No matter what the form – fresh, frozen, canned, dried, juice – all varieties of fruits and vegetables count toward your daily recommendation.* Choose fruits without added sugar or syrups and vegetables without added salt, butter, or cream sauces. Although 100% fruit or vegetable juice counts towards your daily recommendation, the majority of the total daily amount of fruit and vegetables should come from whole fruits and vegetables to help you get enough fiber. Click on <http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/> for more information.
- \$ *Buy in-season fruits and vegetables.* Use local farmer's markets when possible – the foods are fresher and usually cost the same, if not less, because you are buying direct from the farmer.
- \$ *Buy milk (low fat or fat free) in the largest containers you can handle before it spoils* (gallon or ½ gallon). Milk sold at convenience stores usually costs more than at supermarkets. (Fat-free dry milk is an inexpensive back-up choice for using milk in recipes.)
- \$ *Buy a whole chicken and cut it up into parts* instead of buying pre-cut chicken (breast, wings, thighs, legs). Remove the skin before cooking or serving.
- \$ *Stock up on sale items* of healthier foods that you may be able to use in a timely manner. Buy canned, frozen, or packaged foods in bulk for quality and value, but serve appropriate portions within estimated calorie needs. Buy produce, lean meats, and low fat or fat free milk and milk products in bulk amounts that you can eat before they spoil (refer to **We Can!** Portion Distortion for more information on appropriate portion sizes <http://hp2010.nhlbihin.net/portion/index.htm>).
- \$ *Use your food budget wisely.* If you spend \$7 on lunch 5 days a week for a year, you will spend a total of \$1,820. You can save money and calories by bringing a healthier brown bag lunch from home. (see **We Can!** Food Comparison Chart in the **We Can!** Resources section of the Web site.)

Saving Money (and Calories) on Healthy Meals and Snacks

- \$ *Assemble snacks at home* in small baggies using foods such as nuts and seeds, dried whole grain cereal, low fat cheese, dried fruit, fresh vegetables and fruits, rather than buying less healthy, more expensive prepackaged and processed snacks. Serve water, or low fat or fat free milk instead of calorically sweetened beverages. For more ideas on healthier snacks, you can download the *Go, Slow, and Whoa Foods Chart* in the **We Can!** Resources section of the Web site.
- \$ *Cook once, eat twice.* Serve moderate portions of meals, avoid seconds, and freeze leftovers to enjoy later. This will help you save money and calories!
- \$ *Do "batch cooking"* when the food budget and time allow. Cook large amounts of spaghetti sauce, divide it into family-size portions and freeze promptly for later in the month.

Source: Adapted from "My Money-Saving Tips: A Healthier You" Based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, December 2006.

We Can!, or "Ways to Enhance Children's Activity & Nutrition," is a national education program designed for families and communities to help children achieve a healthy weight. The program focuses on *three* important behaviors: *improved* food choices, *increased* physical activity and *reduced* screen time.

For more information about **We Can!** visit <http://wecan.nhlbi.nih.gov> or call 1-866-35-WECAN

