



# A cooking and nutrition Fact Sheet

August 2010

## Secrets of Shopping for a Healthy Family

Food shopping on a budget takes planning. Follow these steps to get the most for your money.

### Step 1: Make a Monthly Food Budget

- Determine how much money, food stamps, and/or WIC coupons you have for the month.
- If you shop once per week, divide your monthly food budget by four to find out how much you have for food each week.
- If you buy non-food items, such as dish soap, paper products or pet food, at the store, be sure to budget some money for these items.

### Step 2: Plan Meals and Snacks for Your Family for a Week

- Check to see what foods you have on hand. Plan to use these foods.
- Check newspaper ads or store flyers for weekly sales.
- Plan to use leftovers for other meals or snacks during the week.
- Be sure to include food from all five groups on MyPyramid.
- Include meatless meals to extend your food dollars.

### Step 3: Make a Shopping List of the Food You Need to Make the Meals and Snacks on Your Menu.

- Avoid extra shopping trips with a shopping list. Stick to the list to keep from spending money on impulse items.
- Substitute items on your list if you find an unadvertised special.
- Determine how much of the food you will need. Sometimes, larger packages cost less. Check the unit price information to compare prices.
- Use coupons for items you would usually purchase. Check to make sure the price with the coupon is the best deal. Store brands are often less expensive than national brands, even with a coupon.
- Try to shop when you and your children are not hungry. You are less likely to buy impulse items, including less nutritious snacks.

- Use the food labels as you shop. The information on the label can help you choose the most nutritious foods. For example: look for 100% real juice, not a juice drink or beverage.
- Buy larger sized packages or in bulk only if you can use the food before it spoils. Buy a larger size and freeze part of it to keep it safe.
- Stock up on canned, packaged or frozen foods when they are on sale.
- Consider the cost of convenience. Can you prepare this food yourself for less? How much more time will it take?
- Pay attention at the checkout. Watch to see that items ring up correctly.
- Buy fruits and vegetables in season when they are less expensive.
- Figure cost per serving, not per pound. Meat with bone and fat yield fewer servings.

#### Step 4: Review Your Shopping List and Budget

- Does this look like a shopping list that would fit your budget?
- Are there other ways to cut food costs? Is there a discount bread store in your area? Other places to shop with lower prices?

#### Step 5: Keep Your Food Safe

- Make grocery shopping your last stop before returning home, especially if you purchase frozen or refrigerated foods.
- At home, put the food away immediately to keep it fresh and safe.
- Rotate your food supply so the “first purchased” is the “first used”.
- Freeze leftovers to be used at another meal.
- Buy fresh fruits and veggies in amounts you can use before they spoil.
- Use foods by the “use by” dates on the label.

#### Step 6: Enjoy Your Family Meals

- Have children help prepare food and set the table for the meal.
- Ask for input into the family meal plan. What would they like to eat? What would they like to help make?

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