

COMMUNITY ACTION AND HUMAN SERVICES



2025

NUTRITION EDUCATION CALENDAR

AFFORDABLE Nutrition

Rethinking the True Cost of Food

When it comes to food insecurity, the conversation has shifted beyond the "price of food" to a more significant metric: **food affordability**.

Traditionally, "food price" has been the primary measure of food costs, tracking the dollar amount of individual items or groups of items and how they fluctuate over time (e.g., the cost of bread increasing by a dollar in a month). However, this metric does not capture the full picture. For many families, a \$10 increase in the cost of groceries can significantly impact their ability to purchase fresh, nutritious food. This is where **food affordability** becomes a critical factor.

Overall US Consumer Price Index (CPI) +6.5%

| | |
|-------------------------------|--------|
| Food Index | +10.4% |
| Cereal/Bakery | +16.1% |
| Dairy and Related | +15.5% |
| Meat, Poultry, Fish, & Eggs | +7.7% |
| Fresh, Shelled Eggs (1 Dozen) | +11.1% |

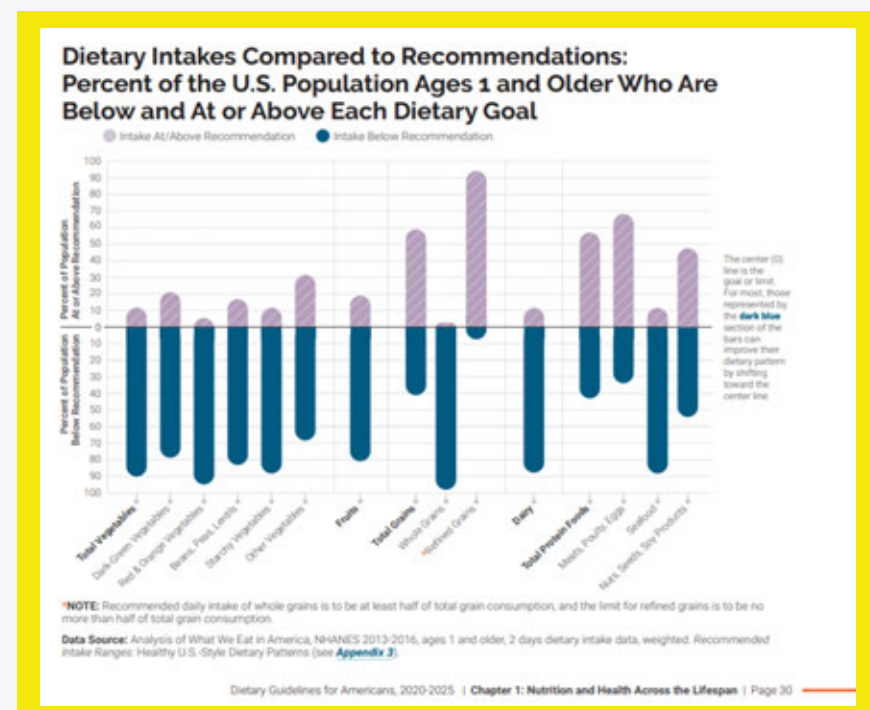
Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics Economic News Release, 12 Jan 2023

What is Food Affordability?

While food price represents a fixed cost, **food affordability** is the ratio of food price to wages, reflecting a household's ability to purchase nutritious food based on their income. Food is considered affordable when individuals have both the financial means and access to buy healthy, nutrient-rich foods. Two key aspects shape this metric.

1. **Nutritional quality** – what constitutes the healthy food people need
2. **Access and income** – how wages and availability are measured in relation to purchasing power

Often, efforts to combat hunger focus solely on calorie intake, ensuring individuals meet the minimum required for sustenance. However, these diets may lack essential nutrients, leaving people nutrition insecure. In many cases, nutrient-dense foods, such as fresh produce, are more expensive and less accessible, exacerbating food affordability challenges.



On the other hand, **income and availability** are critical in determining food affordability. This calculation often considers either average area wages or the income of the working class. Even with sufficient wages, people may still struggle to afford healthy foods, particularly when local prices are high or availability is limited.

Understanding Food Affordability in Our Community

Many families in our communities struggle with food affordability, often relying on food assistance programs. While these programs provide crucial support, they are not always reliable, and benefits can be reduced or removed unexpectedly. Expanding local food networks can help bridge this gap, providing more consistent access to nutritious options.

One issue that affects food affordability is the balance between cost and time. While raw ingredients are often the most affordable, families facing food insecurity may also be short on time, making it difficult to cook from scratch. Prepared meals are often too expensive, further limiting options. Expanding programs like the **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)** to include prepared foods could offer a solution, providing convenience without sacrificing nutrition.

Here are some strategies that can make nutritious food more affordable:

Farmers' Markets

Many local markets offer fresh, seasonal produce at competitive prices and often participate in SNAP, offering matching programs to increase purchasing power.

Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA)

CSA programs allow families to receive fresh, locally grown produce at a lower cost than supermarkets.

Food Banks and Community Kitchens

These organizations can supplement a family's grocery needs, providing essential staples to those in need.

Encouraging Food Affordability in Our Community

Communities can play a vital role in promoting food affordability through creative and sustainable initiatives, such as:

Leveraging Retailer Data for Donations

By analyzing retail data, communities can identify opportunities for food donation, helping alleviate food insecurity with healthy, affordable options.

Rooftop Gardens

These can be established in public housing, allowing residents to grow their own fresh

produce. Expanding rooftop gardens into larger urban agriculture initiatives could provide more widespread food access.

The Role of Local Leaders in Enhancing Food Affordability

Local leaders have a unique opportunity to influence food affordability through policies and infrastructure development. Some key initiatives may include:

Building Cold Storage and Distribution Infrastructure

Proper storage and efficient distribution methods can reduce food waste, particularly with perishable, nutritious items. This can extend the shelf life of healthy foods and improve access for low-income families.

Community Land Trusts for Agriculture

Using vacant land for community gardens or food production can benefit local residents by providing fresh produce and creating economic opportunities through the sale of excess goods.

Improving Food Recovery Efforts

Local governments can facilitate partnerships between retailers and community organizations, making it easier to donate excess food to those in need. Strengthening these connections can reduce food waste and improve food security.

By addressing these challenges and implementing effective strategies, communities can work towards ensuring that everyone has access to affordable, nutritious food. ■



Affordable Nutrition: Navigating Rising Grocery Prices

As grocery prices continue to climb in America, many families are finding it increasingly challenging to maintain a nutritious diet without breaking the bank. This article explores evidence-based strategies for maintaining a healthy diet on a budget, offering practical solutions for American families facing financial constraints.

Strategies for Affordable Nutrition

1. Focus on Nutrient-Dense, Low-Cost Foods

Several foods offer high nutritional value at a relatively low cost:

- **Legumes (beans, lentils, peas):** Rich in protein, fiber, and various micronutrients. A study in the Journal of Nutritional Science (2021) found that replacing some meat with legumes can significantly reduce food costs while maintaining nutritional quality.
- **Eggs:** An excellent source of protein and various nutrients. The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition (2018) reported that eggs are one of the lowest-cost sources of high-quality protein.
- **Frozen vegetables and fruits:** Nutritionally comparable to fresh produce but often more affordable and with a longer shelf life. Research in the Journal of Food Composition and Analysis (2017) found no significant difference in nutrient content between fresh and frozen produce.
- **Whole grains:** Brown rice, oats, and whole wheat pasta are inexpensive sources of fiber and essential nutrients.

2. Strategic Shopping and Meal Planning

- **Buy in bulk:** A study in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine (2019) found that buying in bulk can lead to savings of up to 25% on certain items.
- **Use apps and digital coupons:** Many grocery stores offer digital coupons and apps that can help track sales and save money.
- **Plan meals around sales:** Building weekly meal plans based on discounted items can significantly reduce costs.
- **Choose store brands:** Consumer Reports found that store brands are often 20-25% cheaper than name brands and frequently match or exceed them in quality.

3. Reduce Food Waste

It is estimated that the average American family wastes about \$1,500 worth of food annually. Strategies to reduce waste include:

- **Proper food storage:** Learn optimal storage methods for different foods to extend their shelf life.
- **Use leftovers creatively:** Incorporate leftovers into new meals to avoid waste and save on cooking time.
- **Freeze excess:** Many foods can be frozen for later use, reducing waste and providing quick meal options.

4. Grow Your Own

Even small-scale home gardening can contribute to affordable nutrition:

- A study in the Journal of Extension (2014) found that home gardeners can save an average of \$70 per month on grocery bills during the growing season.
- Focus on high-yield, easy-to-grow plants like tomatoes, lettuce, and herbs.

5. Leverage Community Resources

- The Miami Dade County Community Action & Human Services Department (CAHSD) through its Summer Food Service Program provide free nutritious substantial meals to children under the age of 18 when school is out.
- The Family and Community Engagement division of CAHSD provides food distribution through Share Your Heart (Farm Share) at: Reverend Dr. Edward T. Graham, Joseph Caleb/Liberty City, Hialeah, Culmer, Edison, South Beach, Perrine, Wynwood, Naranja and Florida City neighborhood centers.



SWEET POTATO AND BLACK BEAN TACOS

Yield: 4 Servings

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup sweet potatoes
- 1 16 oz. canned drained black beans
- whole wheat tortillas
- ½ cup yellow onion chopped
- 1 tsp. minced garlic
- a few sprigs of cilantro
- ¼ tsp. cumin
- 1 tsp. lime juice
- 2 tbsp. olive oil

Nutrition Facts

| Serving size | 2 Tacos |
|--------------------|---------|
| Amount Per Serving | |
| Calories | 340 |
| Total Fat | 7 g |
| Cholesterol | 0 mg |
| Sodium | 420 mg |
| Potassium | 920 mg |
| Calcium | 150 mg |
| Carbohydrates | 58 g |
| Fiber | 11 g |
| Added Sugars | 0 g |
| Protein | 10 g |

AVAILABILITY Sweet potatoes are in season, and canned beans are inexpensive.

DIRECTIONS

Roast diced sweet potatoes with olive oil, garlic, and cumin. Sauté onions, add black beans, and warm tortillas. Assemble tacos with the roasted sweet potatoes and black beans, and top with cilantro and a squeeze of lime.

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|------------------|--------|---------|--|---|--------|----------|
| <h1>January</h1> | | | 1 NEW YEARS DAY HOLIDAY | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| | | | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
| | | | 15 | 16 Seed Estimating Guess how many seeds are in an apple. Cut it open and count the actual number of seeds. | 17 | 18 |
| | | | 22 Favorite Fruit Graphing Allow children to try a variety of different fruits. Graph their favorites. Discuss with children the class's most and the least favorite fruit. | 23 | 24 | 25 |
| | | | 29 | 30 Sing-Along - Brussel Sprout I'm kinda cute When I'm served on a plate. I'm just a little mouthful. You can eat six or eight! | 31 | |
| 5 | 6 | 7 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 19 |
| 12 | 13 | 14 | 19 | 20 MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. HOLIDAY | 21 | 26 |
| 19 | 20 | 21 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 31 |

Nutritious Eating on a Budget: Practical Solutions for Families

Maintaining a balanced diet on a budget is challenging but achievable with careful planning and smart choices. By focusing on nutrient-dense, low-cost foods, families can stretch their grocery dollars while still meeting their nutritional needs. Here are practical solutions to help maintain a nutritious diet on a budget.

Maximizing Nutrition While Minimizing Costs

1. Protein

Protein is a key nutrient that can be sourced cost-effectively by combining plant-based and affordable animal proteins. Some examples include:

- **Plant-based proteins:** Legumes like beans and lentils, along with whole grains such as quinoa and brown rice, are inexpensive and protein-rich.
- **Affordable animal proteins:** Eggs, canned fish (like tuna or sardines), and yogurt provide quality protein at a lower cost.

2. Fruits and Vegetables

Fruits and vegetables are essential for a balanced diet, but fresh options can be expensive. To maintain variety and nutrient density, consider:

- **Frozen and canned options:** These are often cheaper than fresh produce and retain their nutritional value. Look for options with no added salt or sugar.
- **Seasonal produce:** Buying fruits and vegetables in season can lower costs.

3. Whole Grains

Whole grains provide more nutrients and fiber than refined grains. Affordable whole grain options include:

- **Brown rice, oats, and whole wheat pasta:** These staples are not only nutritious but also budget-friendly and versatile in various meals.

4. Healthy Fats

Incorporating healthy fats into the diet is important for long-term health. Budget-friendly sources of healthy fats include:

- **Canned fish:** Tuna and salmon are rich in omega-3 fatty acids and typically less expensive than fresh fish.
- **Nuts and seeds:** Buying in bulk can reduce costs. Consider sunflower seeds, peanuts, or almonds.
- **Vegetable oils:** Olive oil or canola oil can be used for cooking and dressings.

5. Sample Budget-Friendly Meal Ideas

- **Breakfast:** Overnight oats made with frozen berries and peanut butter. This meal is nutritious, filling, and inexpensive.
- **Lunch:** Lentil soup with carrots and a slice of whole grain bread. Lentils are protein-packed and cost-effective.
- **Dinner:** A brown rice and bean burrito bowl, using frozen vegetables and homemade salsa. This meal offers fiber, protein, and vitamins at a low cost.
- **Snack:** Hard-boiled eggs or homemade popcorn. Both are nutritious, satisfying, and budget-friendly options.

For personalized advice tailored to specific dietary needs and financial situations, consider consulting a registered dietitian or nutritionist. Many community health centers offer these services at reduced costs or for free.

Remember, small, consistent changes in shopping and eating habits can lead to substantial savings and improved nutrition for your family in the long run.



SPINACH AND LENTIL SOUP

Yield: 6 Servings

INGREDIENTS

- 1 ½ cups fresh spinach
- 2 cups dried lentils
- ½ cup chopped yellow onion
- 1 cup sliced carrots
- 2 tsp. minced garlic
- 3 cups vegetable broth
- 2 tbsp. olive oil
- ¼ tsp. each cumin, turmeric, pepper

AVAILABILITY Spinach is fresh in South Florida, and lentils are a budget-friendly pantry staple.

DIRECTIONS

Sauté onions, garlic, and carrots in olive oil. Add lentils, broth, and spices. Simmer until lentils are soft, then stir in spinach until wilted. Serve warm.

| Nutrition Facts | |
|--------------------|------------|
| Serving size | 1 cup |
| Amount Per Serving | |
| Calories | 250 |
| Total Fat | 5 g |
| Cholesterol | 0 mg |
| Sodium | 480 mg |
| Potassium | 600 mg |
| Calcium | 150 mg |
| Carbohydrates | 34 g |
| Fiber | 8 g |
| Added Sugars | 0 g |
| Protein | 13 g |

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

February

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Great Teeth
Discuss good dental hygiene practices with children. Bacteria in the mouth sticks to teeth as a sticky substance called plaque. The bacteria lives off of foods that we eat every day such as fruits, sweets, breads, cakes, etc. This needs to be brushed off daily. This activity is suitable for toddlers.

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Telescopes

Take 1 oz. sliced lunch meat, 1 Tbsp. cheese spread, 1 tsp. sunflower nuts, pretzel sticks; Use the cheese and nuts as a spread. Roll up lunch meat and secure with a pretzel stick.

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PRESIDENT'S DAY
HOLIDAY

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19

Sing-Along - Cabbage

My head is quite thick
So people tell me.
I guess that's the reason
Grocery stores sell me!

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Jus Papaye

Papaya Juice milkshake (or Jus Papaye in creole) is used to start the typical working day. It's filled with everything you need to keep you moving. Blend 1 cup of ripe frozen papaya, ½ cup evaporated milk, pinch of salt, 1 tablespoon of sugar, and a pinch of vanilla extract. Discuss the Haitian culture. This activity is suitable for toddlers.

28

Affordable Nutrition for Young Children:

Maintaining Proper Nutrition While Managing Rising Grocery Costs

Maintaining a balanced diet on a budget is challenging but achievable with careful planning and smart choices. By focusing on nutrient-dense, low-cost foods, families can stretch their grocery dollars while still meeting their nutritional needs. Here are practical solutions to help maintain a nutritious diet on a budget.

Give Your Kids a Head Start

CAHSD Head Start/Early Head Start is a program for children 0-5 years of age. Eligible children receive breakfast, lunch and snack free at this preschool program and babies are fed formula and baby food free of cost to parents, which also helps stretch the family's food budget.

Check Out WIC If Kids Are Age 5 or Younger

WIC is the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children. This program provides services for low-income, pregnant, breastfeeding and postpartum women. WIC also serves infants and children up to age 5 who are at risk for poor nutrition.

If you're eligible, you'll receive:

- Foods to help meet the nutrition needs of yourself and your young children. For example, iron-fortified cereal, whole-wheat bread, eggs, milk, cheese, beans, peanut butter, canned fish, fruits and vegetables and vitamin C-rich fruit juice.
- Foods for young children such as baby food, iron-fortified infant cereals and iron-fortified infant formulas.
- Referrals to health care providers.
- Education about nutrition and breastfeeding.

The Importance of Proper Nutrition for Young Children

Proper nutrition during the early years is crucial for healthy physical and cognitive development. The nutrient needs of young children (ages 1-5) include essential vitamins and minerals for brain development, immune support, and overall growth. Key nutrients for young children include:

- **Protein:** Supports growth and tissue repair
- **Iron:** Crucial for cognitive development and preventing anemia
- **Calcium and Vitamin D:** Essential for healthy bones and teeth
- **Vitamins A, C, and E:** Important for immune function and overall health
- **Omega-3 Fatty Acids:** Important for brain development
- **Fiber:** Supports digestive health and prevents constipation

Practice Portions

Practice makes perfect...portions! While some days the kiddos might be hungrier than others, you can provide smaller servings for the kids and offer them extra helpings if they are still hungry to prevent unnecessary food waste. This can also help kids learn to eat what they need to feel just-right, building healthy habits for the future.

Reject Ready-Made

Pre-made meals that come in boxes or to-go containers at the store can be filled with additives or other unhealthy extras. Not to mention, they can often cost more than making it yourself. To maintain meals with appropriate levels of sugar, sodium, and fat, cook from scratch. You can feel confident about knowing what is going into your child's meals and feel in control of the cost you are willing to spend. A simple home cooked meal might take a little longer to prepare but it can be well worth it for the nutritional and monetary value.

Save Scraps

When you cook healthy meals for kids, you might notice there can be a lot of waste. But, oftentimes, there can be hacks for using what might be wasted in unexpected ways. For example, when berries are starting to go bad, freeze or blend them. Or if you have some vegetables leftover, pickle, purée, or sauté! You can use the pulp for soup or even make vegetable stock. For leftover lemons, make a low-sugar lemonade! Or, squeeze the juice into ice cube trays to add to water glasses on a sunny day.

Family Favorites

You know those amazing meals you keep coming back to? The whole family craves them and the kids can't seem to get enough? Go ahead and make it! Increase variety by changing up key ingredients and incorporating the healthiest items you have on hand. Ultimately, finding what budget-friendly family meals, snacks, and treats are beloved and sticking with them, can keep your kids and your wallet happy!



TOMATO AND CUCUMBER SALAD WITH CHICKPEAS

Yield: 4 Servings

INGREDIENTS

1 cup chopped tomatoes
1 cup chopped cucumbers
¾ cup canned drained chickpeas
1 tbsp. olive oil
1 tbsp. lemon juice
1 tsp. chopped parsley
salt and pepper to taste

AVAILABILITY Tomatoes and cucumbers are abundant in March.

DIRECTIONS

Mix together chopped tomatoes and cucumbers. Rinse chickpeas and toss with vegetables, olive oil, lemon juice, parsley, salt, and pepper for a refreshing and budget-friendly salad.

| Nutrition Facts | |
|--------------------|------------|
| Serving size | 1 cup |
| Amount Per Serving | |
| Calories | 180 |
| Total Fat | 6 g |
| Cholesterol | 0 mg |
| Sodium | 250 mg |
| Potassium | 450 mg |
| Calcium | 60 mg |
| Carbohydrates | 23 g |
| Fiber | 5 g |
| Added Sugars | 0 g |
| Protein | 7 g |

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

March

1

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Butterfly Salad

Slice a pineapple ring in 1/2 to use an outline of the butterfly's wings. Use a piece of celery stick as the body. Place 1 tsp. of cottage cheese inside of pineapple ring. Use sliced green olives for eyes. You can also add carrot sticks for antennae.

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Sing-Along - Broccoli

My friends call me trees.
Now that's a funny name.
Though I am a dark green
With stalks just the same.
We're the veggies
You should eat every day!
Now don't make a face.
We're as good as we say!

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Broccoli Slaw Recipe

Mix 1/2 package broccoli slaw, 1/2 cup assorted (grapes, chopped apples or mandarin oranges) fruit to taste, dry ramen noodles or rice noodles, prepared oriental or sesame salad dressing. Toss with the dressing just before serving.

23/30

24/31

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MARCH 24 – 28, 2025 – SPRING BREAK

Affordable Nutrition: For Seniors on a Fixed Income

While rising grocery prices present challenges, seniors living on fixed incomes can maintain a nutritious diet by focusing on affordable, nutrient-dense foods. By prioritizing cost-effective sources of protein, using frozen and canned vegetables, buying whole grains in bulk, and utilizing assistance programs like SNAP, seniors can ensure they get the essential nutrients they need to stay healthy. With smart shopping, meal planning, and batch cooking, seniors can stretch their grocery budget while continuing to enjoy nutritious, home-cooked meals.

The Importance of Proper Nutrition for Seniors

As people age, their nutritional needs change. Seniors require fewer calories but an increase of specific nutrients to stay healthy. Eating a nutrient-rich diet is especially important for seniors, as malnutrition can worsen chronic health conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, and osteoporosis. Key nutrients for older adults include:

- **Protein:** Essential for maintaining muscle mass
- **Calcium and Vitamin D:** Crucial for bone health
- **Vitamin B12:** Important for neurological function and blood cell formation
- **Fiber:** Supports digestive health and helps manage chronic conditions
- **Potassium:** Helps lower blood pressure and reduce the risk of kidney stones

Shop Smart with Coupons, Store Brands, and Discount Stores

Shopping smart can significantly reduce grocery bills for seniors. Using coupons, buying store brands, and shopping at discount stores can help stretch limited budgets.

- **Choose store brands:** Consumer Reports found that store brands are often 20-25% cheaper than name brands and frequently match or exceed them in quality.
- **Shop during senior discount days:** Many grocery stores offer special discounts for seniors on specific days.

Choose Nutritious, Affordable Foods:

- **Prioritize whole grains:** Whole grains are a good source of fiber and nutrients.
- **Choose lean proteins:** Opt for beans, lentils, and poultry over red meat.
- **Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables:** These are essential for good health and can be affordable when purchased in season.
- **Limit processed foods:** Processed foods are often high in unhealthy fats, sugars, and sodium.
- **Drink plenty of water:** Staying hydrated is important for overall health, and it can help reduce hunger.

Leverage Community Resources

- **SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program):** Many seniors are eligible but don't apply. A study in the Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (2018) found that SNAP participation was associated with improved food security and dietary quality in older adults.
- **Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program:** Provides low-income seniors with coupons for fresh produce at farmers' markets.
- **CAHSD Meals on Wheels:** Offers meal delivery services for seniors, often on a sliding scale based on income.
- **Food banks and community kitchens:** Can supplement grocery purchases for seniors in need.
- **CAHSD Senior congregate centers:** Offers communal meals and nutrition education programs.

Affordable, Nutritious Meal Ideas for Seniors

To help seniors put these strategies into practice, here are a few affordable, nutrient-dense meal ideas:

- **Vegetable and Bean Soup:** A simple soup made with frozen or canned vegetables, canned beans, and whole grain pasta or brown rice. It's filling, easy to make in bulk, and costs just a few dollars per serving.
- **Egg and Vegetable Scramble:** Scramble eggs with frozen spinach and canned tomatoes for a protein-rich, affordable meal that provides essential vitamins and minerals.
- **Overnight Oats:** Mix oats with Greek yogurt, milk, and fruit (fresh, frozen, or canned) and let sit in the fridge overnight. This makes for an easy, fiber-rich breakfast that supports heart and digestive health.



ZUCCHINI AND BROWN RICE CASSEROLE

Yield: 6 Servings

INGREDIENTS

1 cup chopped zucchini
2 cups brown rice
½ cup diced yellow onion
1 tbsp. minced garlic
2 whole eggs
¼ cup milk
1 tbsp. olive oil
salt and pepper to taste
shredded cheese (optional)

Nutrition Facts

| Serving size | 1 cup |
|--------------------|--------|
| Amount Per Serving | |
| Calories | 270 |
| Total Fat | 10 g |
| Cholesterol | 60 mg |
| Sodium | 360 mg |
| Potassium | 450 mg |
| Calcium | 140 mg |
| Carbohydrates | 38 g |
| Fiber | 4 g |
| Added Sugars | 0 g |
| Protein | 9 g |

AVAILABILITY Zucchini is in season and reasonably priced.

DIRECTIONS

Cook brown rice and sauté zucchini, onions, and garlic in olive oil. Whisk eggs and milk, then combine with rice and sautéed vegetables in a baking dish. Top with cheese if desired, and bake until golden.

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|--------|--------|---|--|--|--------|----------|
| | | 1 | 2 Fresh Fruit Dip Blend 1/2 cup of plain frozen yogurt with 3 tablespoons of fresh squeezed orange juice well. Serve with fresh cut fruit as a dip. | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6 | 7 | 8 Sing-Along - Potato I've an eye for perfection To give you the best. Baked, mashed or fried- I'll pass the test! | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 Ambrosia Salad Mix together ½ cup low fat sour cream, ½ cup low fat frozen yogurt, 1 cup drained mandarin oranges, 1 cup drained peach chunks, 1 cup drained pineapple chunks, 2 tablespoons coconut flakes. Chill well and serve. | 18 | 19 |
| 20 | 21 | 22 Foods from the Rainbow Have children organize cards by color to make a rainbow. Once the rainbow is made, explain how we should eat foods that are colorful and that we should eat a range of colors every day. Then have children to select some foods from the rainbow to represent the foods they might eat in one day. The goal is for every child to have a range of colors. | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | April | | |

Specialty Mushrooms: A Nutritional Powerhouse

Mushrooms have long been a staple in global cuisines, revered for their earthy flavor and nutritional benefits. Recently, specialty mushrooms, such as shiitake, oyster, maitake, lion's mane, and enoki, have gained popularity in American kitchens, not only for their distinctive tastes and textures but also for their impressive health benefits.

Accessibility of Specialty Mushrooms

Thanks to the growing interest in plant-based foods, specialty mushrooms are more widely available than ever before. Farmers' markets, local grocery stores, and major supermarket chains now carry a variety of these mushrooms. Shiitake, oyster, and maitake mushrooms can often be found fresh in the produce section, while dried versions of mushrooms such as porcini and shiitake are readily available in most health food stores or online. In urban areas, the accessibility of specialty mushrooms has been bolstered by indoor farming and sustainable practices.

Cost Considerations

While specialty mushrooms are often considered pricier than button or cremini varieties, they are still quite affordable. The cost of fresh shiitake mushrooms, for example, typically ranges from \$2.59 to \$4.15 per pound, depending on the season and location. Oyster mushrooms are usually priced between \$3 and \$9 per pound. While this may seem more expensive than common mushroom varieties, a little goes a long way. Given their dense texture and rich flavor, smaller quantities of specialty mushrooms can significantly enhance a dish.

In dried form, specialty mushrooms can be even more cost-effective. Dried mushrooms not only have a long shelf life but also rehydrate to produce a concentrated flavor that works well in broths, soups, and sauces. Purchasing dried shiitake, porcini, or maitake mushrooms can reduce food waste, as they last for months when stored properly.

Nutritional Value of Specialty Mushrooms

Specialty mushrooms pack a nutritional punch, offering a range of essential nutrients, vitamins, and antioxidants. Here are some of the key nutritional highlights:

- **Shiitake Mushrooms:** Known for their immune-boosting properties, shiitakes are rich in vitamins B and D, as well as polysaccharides that help support immune function. They also contain compounds like eritadenine, which may help reduce cholesterol.
- **Oyster Mushrooms:** These mushrooms are high in fiber, low in calories, and provide a good source of protein, making them ideal for those on plant-based diets. They also contain antioxidants and have been shown to reduce inflammation.
- **Maitake Mushrooms:** Maitakes, also known as "hen of the woods," are prized for their potential to regulate blood sugar and support the immune system. They're rich in vitamins C and D and contain beta-glucans, which have been linked to cancer-fighting properties.
- **Lion's Mane Mushrooms:** A favorite in functional foods, lion's mane is known for its potential cognitive benefits. Research suggests it may help support brain health by promoting nerve growth and reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression.

- **Enoki Mushrooms:** Low in calories and fat, enoki mushrooms are a good source of B vitamins and antioxidants, which help protect the body from oxidative stress and inflammation.

These mushrooms are also rich in fiber and have high water content, making them low in calories while providing a sense of fullness, which is beneficial for weight management.



Ease of Use in Common Recipes

Specialty mushrooms are incredibly versatile and easy to incorporate into a wide range of dishes. Their unique flavors and textures add depth to many common American meals, from pasta to stir-fries. Below are a few simple ways to use these mushrooms in everyday recipes:

- **Pasta Dishes:** Add sautéed shiitake or oyster mushrooms to pasta with olive oil, garlic, and Parmesan for a quick and flavorful dinner. Their meaty texture makes them a great alternative to traditional proteins.
- **Soups and Stews:** Maitake and shiitake mushrooms can enhance the umami profile of broths and soups, offering a rich, savory depth. Dried mushrooms, especially, can be steeped in water to create a flavorful mushroom broth.
- **Stir-fries:** Lion's mane or enoki mushrooms can be quickly stir-fried with vegetables, tofu, or meat. Their mild flavors pair well with soy sauce, ginger, and garlic.
- **Salads:** Thinly sliced raw enoki mushrooms add a delicate crunch to salads. Grilled or roasted maitake mushrooms can be used as a centerpiece for hearty salad bowls.
- **Risotto:** Specialty mushrooms are a classic ingredient in risottos. Oyster and shiitake mushrooms bring a depth of flavor that complements creamy Arborio rice.
- **Tacos and Burgers:** Sautéed oyster mushrooms are a delicious vegetarian filling for tacos or as a topping for burgers, adding a satisfying umami flavor that mimics meatiness.

Specialty mushrooms are an accessible, affordable, and nutrient-rich food that offers immense versatility in the kitchen. With growing accessibility and more cost-effective options available, now is the perfect time to explore the rich flavors and benefits that specialty mushrooms can bring to your meals.



BELL PEPPER AND MUSHROOM STIR-FRY

Yield: 4 Servings

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups chopped green and red bell peppers
- 1 cup sliced mushrooms
- 1 tbsp. soy sauce
- 1 tbsp. minced garlic
- ½ tbsp. minced ginger
- 3 cups brown rice, cooked
- 3 tbsp. olive oil
- salt and pepper to taste

AVAILABILITY Bell peppers and mushrooms are fresh and affordable.

DIRECTIONS

Sauté sliced mushrooms, bell peppers, garlic, and ginger in olive oil. Serve over cooked brown rice for a simple, flavorful meal.

Nutrition Facts

| | |
|--------------------|------------|
| Serving size | 1 cup |
| Amount Per Serving | |
| Calories | 220 |
| Total Fat | 7 g |
| Cholesterol | 0 mg |
| Sodium | 600 mg |
| Potassium | 650 mg |
| Calcium | 50 mg |
| Carbohydrates | 36 g |
| Fiber | 5 g |
| Added Sugars | 0 g |
| Protein | 5 g |

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

May

1

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Flower, Flower, Cauliflower!
Introduce a new vegetable – Cauliflower. Let the children touch and then taste the vegetable. They can also sing: I carry white flowers; To break off and eat; I'm sometimes served raw; A nutritious snack or treat!

LAW ENFORCEMENT
APPRECIATION DAY
HOLIDAY

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Balanced Meal Plate
The children would choose one picture from each food group to paste on a paper plate. The pictures from supermarket advertisements could be used. Explain to children that their plate must include more vegetables and fruits, whole grains, low fat dairy and less meats, fats, and sugars.

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Watermelon Waldorf Salad
In a mixing bowl, combine 1 cup seeded watermelon chunks, ½ cup diced celery, and ½ cup seedless grape halves. Just before serving, add ¼ cup low fat plain yogurt; stir to coat. Sprinkle with toasted sliced almonds.

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MEMORIAL DAY
HOLIDAY

Sauté diced eggplant, garlic, and onion in olive oil. Add fresh tomatoes and basil, simmering until soft. Serve over whole wheat pasta with a sprinkle of Parmesan if desired.

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|--------|---|---|--|---|--------|----------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 LAST DAY OF SCHOOL FOR HEAD START | 6 | 7 |
| 8 | 9 FIRST DAY OF SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM | 10 | 11 Red Raspberry Rouser Blend 1 cup frozen raspberries, 1 cup frozen strawberry yogurt, and ½ cup chilled pineapple juice ingredients well. Serve in little cups and enjoy. This activity is suitable for toddlers. | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 JUNETEENTH DAY HOLIDAY | 20 | 21 |
| 22 | 23 | 24 Banana Berry Ice Cream Blend 1 cup frozen mixed berries, 1 cup frozen banana and ½ cup of coconut milk. Freeze them into cubes and serve. This activity is suitable for toddlers. | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |
| 29 | 30 | June | | | | |

Affordable Nutrition: During Pregnancy

Pregnancy is a time when proper nutrition is crucial for both the health of the mother and the development of the baby. While grocery prices are rising, it's still possible to meet these increased nutritional needs within a budget. With thoughtful planning and cost-effective strategies, pregnant women can maintain a healthy diet without overspending.

Essential Nutrients During Pregnancy

During pregnancy, certain nutrients are especially important to support the growth and development of the baby. These include:

- 1. Folate (Folic Acid):** Vital for the prevention of neural tube defects. Sources include fortified cereals, leafy greens, beans, and lentils.
- 2. Iron:** Supports the increase in blood volume and prevents anemia. Rich sources include lean meats, eggs, legumes, and fortified grains.
- 3. Calcium:** Needed for strong bones and teeth, and to support the mother's bone health. Sources include dairy products, fortified plant-based milks, and dark leafy greens.
- 4. Omega-3 Fatty Acids:** Important for brain and eye development. Found in fatty fish like salmon, flaxseeds, chia seeds, and walnuts.
- 5. Protein:** Essential for tissue development and growth. Good sources include eggs, poultry, dairy, legumes, and quinoa.

Choose Nutrient-Dense, Affordable Foods

- Eggs:** Rich in protein, choline, and vitamins
- Lentils and beans:** High in folate, iron, and fiber
- Canned salmon or sardines:** Excellent source of omega-3s, calcium, and vitamin D
- Sweet potatoes:** Packed with vitamin A and fiber
- Frozen Vegetables:** Frozen options like spinach, broccoli, and peas are often cheaper than fresh and retain their nutritional value. These can be added to stir-fries, casseroles, or soups. High in folate, iron, and vitamins A and C
- Greek yogurt:** Good source of protein and calcium
- Peanut butter:** Provides protein and healthy fats
- Oats:** Rich in fiber and iron
- Frozen berries:** High in vitamin C and antioxidants
- Canned pumpkin:** Excellent source of vitamin A and fiber
- Fortified Cereals:** Look for cereals that are fortified with folic acid, iron, and other essential vitamins and minerals. They are often low-cost and provide a convenient way to meet your daily nutritional needs.

Budget-Friendly Meal Ideas

- Lentil Soup:** A hearty and nutritious meal made with lentils, vegetables, and broth.
- Whole Grain Pasta with Tomato Sauce:** A simple and affordable dish that can be customized with your favorite toppings.
- Grilled Salmon with Roasted Vegetables:** A protein-packed meal that's easy to prepare.
- Avocado Toast:** A quick and healthy breakfast or snack option.
- Homemade Trail Mix:** Combine nuts, seeds, and dried fruits for a nutritious and portable snack.

While a balanced diet can provide most of the nutrients needed during pregnancy, prenatal vitamins can help fill in any nutritional gaps. Consult with your healthcare provider to determine if prenatal supplements are right for you.

Remember, maintaining a healthy diet during pregnancy is essential for both your well-being and your baby's development.

Maintaining a balanced and nutrient-rich diet during pregnancy doesn't have to be expensive. By focusing on affordable, nutrient-dense foods, planning meals in advance, and using community resources, pregnant women can meet their nutritional needs while keeping grocery costs under control.



WATERMELON AND FETA SALAD

Yield: 4 Servings

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups watermelon
- 1 cup diced cucumber
- 2 tbsp. feta cheese
- a few sprigs of mint
- ½ tbsp. olive oil
- 1 tsp. lime juice

AVAILABILITY Watermelon is in season and widely available.

DIRECTIONS

Place diced watermelon and cucumber in a large bowl. Toss with crumbled feta, fresh mint, olive oil, and lime juice for a refreshing summer salad.

| Nutrition Facts | |
|--------------------|------------|
| Serving size | 1 cup |
| Amount Per Serving | |
| Calories | 180 |
| Total Fat | 9 g |
| Cholesterol | 15 mg |
| Sodium | 280 mg |
| Potassium | 350 mg |
| Calcium | 110 mg |
| Carbohydrates | 21 g |
| Fiber | 1 g |
| Added Sugars | 0 g |
| Protein | 6 g |

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY | |
|--------|--------|---------|-----------|--|--|---|----|
| July | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 INDEPENDENCE DAY HOLIDAY | 5 | |
| | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 Groovy Green Smoothie Blend 1 banana, 1 cup grapes (for a thicker smoothie, freeze in advance) with 6 ounces vanilla yogurt, ½ apple chopped, and 1 ½ cups fresh spinach leaves. Let children enjoy. This activity is suitable for toddlers. | 11 | 12 |
| | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 Mango Delight Let children touch a whole mango. Slice it and let them smell and taste it. Discuss the seed and how it is grown in a tree. Explain how mango can be eaten differently such as mango jelly, juice, or preserves, etc. This activity is suitable for toddlers. | 24 | 25 LAST DAY OF SCHOOL FOR EARLY HEAD START/CCP | 26 |
| | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | |

Affordable Nutrition: For Breastfeeding Mothers

Breastfeeding is a vital period for both the mother and the baby, as it provides optimal nutrition and immune support for the infant while promoting recovery and well-being for the mother. However, ensuring proper nutrition while breastfeeding can be challenging, especially with rising food costs. Fortunately, with careful planning and smart food choices, breastfeeding women can meet their nutritional needs on a budget without compromising on quality or health..

Budget-Friendly Nutritional Solutions for Breastfeeding Women

1. Affordable Protein Sources

- **Eggs:** Affordable, nutrient-dense, and easy to prepare, eggs are an excellent source of high-quality protein. They also provide important nutrients like vitamin D and choline, which supports brain development in infants.
- **Legumes:** Beans, lentils, and chickpeas are inexpensive and provide plant-based protein along with fiber, which aids digestion. They can be used in soups, stews, salads, and casseroles.
- **Canned Sardines and Salmon:** Opt for canned fish, which is a budget-friendly source of both protein and omega-3 fatty acids (specifically DHA), essential for the baby's brain development.

2. Calcium-Rich Foods

- **Low-Cost Dairy Options:** Milk, yogurt, and cheese are great sources of calcium and relatively inexpensive. Buying plain yogurt in larger containers is often cheaper and can be flavored with fruit or honey.
- **Fortified Non-Dairy Alternatives:** For those who are lactose intolerant or prefer plant-based options, fortified plant milks (such as almond, soy, or oat milk) are affordable and often contain added calcium and vitamin D.

3. Iron Sources

- **Canned Beans:** Lentils, kidney beans, and chickpeas are not only high in protein but also rich in iron. Pair them with vitamin C-rich foods like bell peppers or oranges to boost iron absorption.
- **Lean Meats:** Ground turkey and chicken thighs are affordable meat options that provide both iron and protein. Incorporating these into meals like stir-fries or casseroles ensures nutrient density at a lower cost.

4. Omega-3-Rich Foods

- **Canned Fish:** Salmon, mackerel, and sardines are excellent sources of DHA and much cheaper when bought canned.
- **Ground Flaxseeds and Chia Seeds:** Both are relatively inexpensive and can be added to smoothies, oatmeal, or yogurt for a plant-based source of omega-3s.

5. Whole Grains

- **Oats:** Oats are not only a great source of fiber and energy, but they also support milk production. Buy them in bulk to save money and use them in oatmeal, overnight oats, or homemade granola.
- **Brown Rice and Quinoa:** Both are affordable whole grains that provide energy, fiber, and key nutrients like B vitamins, which help combat postpartum fatigue.

6. Fruits and Vegetables

- **Frozen and Canned Produce:** Fresh produce can be expensive, but frozen and canned fruits and vegetables are often just as nutritious and much cheaper. Look for options with no added salt or sugar.

Frozen berries, spinach, peas, and mixed vegetables are versatile and easy to store.

- **Seasonal and Local Produce:** Buying fruits and vegetables in season, or shopping at local farmers' markets, can help reduce costs. Opt for affordable options like carrots, potatoes, cabbage, and apples, which are often available year-round.

7. Hydration

- Drinking enough water is critical for milk production, so keep a refillable water bottle on hand to ensure adequate hydration throughout the day. Herbal teas, soups, and water-rich foods like cucumbers and watermelon can also contribute to fluid intake.



Benefits of Proper Nutrition During Breastfeeding

1. **Supports Infant Development:** Breast milk is packed with nutrients that promote the baby's brain, eye, and immune system development. Adequate intake of omega-3 fatty acids, vitamins, and minerals in the mother's diet helps ensure that the baby receives these essential nutrients.
2. **Boosts Maternal Health:** Meeting nutrient needs helps the mother recover postpartum and prevents nutrient deficiencies that can lead to fatigue, anemia, or weakened bones. Consuming enough protein, calcium, and iron is particularly important for maintaining energy and long-term health.
3. **Supports Milk Production:** A well-balanced diet, rich in whole grains, protein, and healthy fats, helps support milk production and quality, ensuring that the baby receives sufficient nutrition.
4. **Promotes Long-Term Health for Both Mother and Baby:** A diet high in nutrient-dense, budget-friendly foods helps maintain healthy body weight, regulate blood sugar levels, and provide the energy needed for breastfeeding and daily activities.

With careful planning, breastfeeding mothers can ensure that both they and their babies receive the vital nutrients needed for optimal health and development.

For personalized advice, consulting with a registered dietitian or healthcare provider can provide tailored recommendations to meet individual nutritional needs during breastfeeding.



OKRA AND TOMATO STEW

Yield: 4 Servings

INGREDIENTS

3 cups cleaned okra
1 cup chopped tomatoes
¼ cup chopped yellow onion
1 clove minced garlic
2 tbsp. olive oil
¼ cup vegetable broth
¼ tsp. each paprika, cayenne, cumin

AVAILABILITY Okra is abundant in South Florida in August.

DIRECTIONS

Sauté onions, garlic, and okra in olive oil. Add diced tomatoes, broth, and spices. Simmer until the okra is tender and flavors meld.

Nutrition Facts

| Serving size | 1 cup |
|--------------------|--------|
| Amount Per Serving | |
| Calories | 160 |
| Total Fat | 5 g |
| Cholesterol | 0 mg |
| Sodium | 400 mg |
| Potassium | 550 mg |
| Calcium | 70 mg |
| Carbohydrates | 22 g |
| Fiber | 5 g |
| Added Sugars | 0 g |
| Protein | 3 g |

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

August

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

LAST DAY OF SUMMER
FOOD SERVICE
PROGRAM

14

15

16

17

18

FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL
FOR HEAD START/
EARLY HEAD START/CCP

19

20

21

22

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24/31

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Table Setting

Teach children how to set the table with plates, napkins, cups, forks, and spoons. Teach them to clear the table when meal service is completed.

Negative Health Consequences

of Sugar-Sweetened Beverages and Budget-Friendly Alternatives

Sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) have become a staple part of American diets, but their excessive consumption has been linked to a variety of negative health consequences. With rising awareness of these dangers and increasing grocery costs, finding affordable, healthier alternatives is key to improving public health without breaking the bank.

The Health Risks of Sugar-Sweetened Beverages

- **Weight Gain and Obesity:** SSBs are a significant source of empty calories, contributing to weight gain and obesity. Excessive weight gain can increase the risk of chronic diseases, including heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and certain types of cancer.
- **Type 2 Diabetes:** Studies have shown that regular consumption of SSBs is associated with an increased risk of developing type 2 diabetes. This is likely due to the high sugar content, which can impair insulin sensitivity.
- **Cardiovascular Disease:** SSBs have been linked to increased blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and inflammation, all of which are risk factors for cardiovascular disease.
- **Non-Alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease (NAFLD):** Excessive intake of SSBs can contribute to the development of NAFLD, a condition characterized by the accumulation of fat in the liver.
- **Dental Health Problems:** The high sugar content in SSBs can promote tooth decay and cavities.



Affordable Alternatives to Sugar-Sweetened Beverages

- **Water:** Water is the most essential and affordable beverage. Carry a reusable water bottle and aim to drink at least eight glasses per day.
- **Unsweetened Tea:** Tea is a great alternative to sugary drinks. Opt for unsweetened black, green, or herbal teas.
- **Infused Water:** Add flavor to your water by infusing it with fruits, herbs, or cucumbers.
- **Coffee:** Black coffee is a low-calorie beverage that can provide a boost of energy.
- **Unsweetened Sparkling Water:** Sparkling water can be a refreshing alternative to soda. Add a squeeze of lemon or lime for extra flavor.
- **Homemade Lemonade:** Make your own lemonade using fresh lemons, water, and a natural sweetener like honey or stevia.
- **Fruit Smoothies:** Blend fruits with unsweetened yogurt or plant-based milk for a nutritious and satisfying beverage.

Tips for Reducing Sugar Intake

- **Read Labels:** Carefully read food and beverage labels to check for added sugars. Look for products with low or no added sugar content.
- **Limit Sweetened Foods:** Reduce your overall intake of sugary foods, including candy, pastries, and baked goods.
- **Gradually Reduce Sugar Intake:** If you're used to drinking sugary beverages, try gradually reducing your intake over time.
- **Find Healthy Alternatives:** Experiment with different sugar-free beverages and snacks to find alternatives you enjoy.

By making conscious choices and opting for healthier alternatives, you can significantly reduce your intake of sugar-sweetened beverages and improve your overall health. Remember, small changes can make a big difference.



BUTTERNUT SQUASH AND BLACK BEAN CHILI

Yield: 4 Servings

INGREDIENTS

- 1 ½ cups cleaned, washed and peeled butternut squash
- 1 16 oz. can drained black beans
- ½ cup diced yellow onion
- 1 clove minced garlic
- ¼ tsp. chili powder
- ¼ tsp. cumin
- 1 cup vegetable broth

AVAILABILITY Butternut squash is available and inexpensive.

DIRECTIONS

Sauté onions and garlic with chili powder and cumin. Add diced butternut squash, black beans, and broth. Simmer until the squash is soft and the chili is thick.

| Nutrition Facts | |
|--------------------|------------|
| Serving size | 1 cup |
| Amount Per Serving | |
| Calories | 280 |
| Total Fat | 6 g |
| Cholesterol | 0 mg |
| Sodium | 420 mg |
| Potassium | 960 mg |
| Calcium | 120 mg |
| Carbohydrates | 49 g |
| Fiber | 10 g |
| Added Sugars | 0 g |
| Protein | 9 g |

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|--------|---------------------------|---|---|--|--------|----------|
| | 1 LABOR DAY HOLIDAY | 2 | 3 | 4 Discuss table manners with children Let them observe staff during mealtime to identify good manners. Encourage children who are using good manners. | 5 | 6 |
| 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 Sing-Along - Pea I live in a pod With so many others. I think I was born With one hundred brothers! | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14 | 15 | 16 Tropical Fizz Mix ½ cup pineapple chunks, ½ cup Papaya chunks, ½ cup Mango chunks in a bowl. Pour chilled 12 ounces of lemon-lime seltzer over fruits. Serve immediately. | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 Planting Seeds Song Let children plant some seeds. Teach them this song. "I dig, dig, dig and plant some seeds. I rake, rake, rake and pull some weeds. I wait and watch and soon I know, my gardens sprouts have begun to grow". This activity is suitable for toddlers. | 26 | 27 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | September | | | |

Sustainable and Cost-Effective Chocolate: A New Era for Chocolate Lovers

For all chocolate enthusiasts, there’s a growing need to consider the sustainability and future of our beloved treat. Did you know that half of the global supply of cocoa beans comes from just two African countries — Ivory Coast and Ghana? These regions, located near the equator, are increasingly impacted by extreme weather events driven by climate change. This makes cocoa production more vulnerable than ever before.

The global chocolate industry relies heavily on cocoa beans from a small geographical area, primarily the Ivory Coast and Ghana. These regions, situated near the equator, are increasingly affected by extreme weather events linked to climate change. As a result, cocoa bean prices have more than tripled in a single year, prompting major manufacturers to stockpile supplies and seek alternatives.

The Rise of Chocolate Alternatives

In response to these challenges, companies like Planet A Foods are pioneering chocolate substitutes that aim to replicate the beloved flavor and texture of chocolate without relying on cocoa beans. Their product, ChoViva, represents a breakthrough in sustainable confectionery.

The Science Behind ChoViva

Developing a convincing chocolate alternative requires meticulous research and development:

- 1. Extensive experimentation with over 100 ingredients
- 2. 700-800 recipe iterations to achieve the desired taste and texture
- 3. Focus on replicating chocolate's complex aroma profile

The final recipe utilizes oats and sunflower seeds as base ingredients, which undergo fermentation and roasting processes similar to cocoa beans. This innovative approach aims to recreate chocolate's distinctive flavor while using more sustainable and widely available ingredients.

Sustainability and Cost-Effectiveness

ChoViva and similar alternatives offer several advantages over traditional chocolate:

- 1. Reduced Carbon Footprint:** By using locally sourceable ingredients like oats and sunflower seeds, these alternatives significantly reduce transportation-related emissions.
- 2. Water Conservation:** Oats and sunflower seeds require less water than cocoa trees, contributing to more sustainable agriculture practices.
- 3. Price Stability:** With a diversified ingredient base, these alternatives are less susceptible to price fluctuations caused by regional climate events.
- 4. Scalability:** Oats and sunflower seeds can be grown in various climates, allowing for more flexible and resilient supply chains.



The Role of Chocolate Alternatives

While not intended to entirely replace traditional chocolate, these alternatives aim to substitute cocoa in products where chocolate is an ingredient rather than the main focus. This approach allows for:

- 1. Reduced pressure on cocoa supplies**
- 2. Lower and more stable prices for chocolate-flavored products**
- 3. Increased sustainability in the confectionery industry**

For chocolate lovers concerned about sustainability and cost, the future looks promising. Innovative alternatives like ChoViva offer a way to enjoy chocolate flavors while supporting more environmentally friendly and economically stable practices. As these technologies evolve, consumers can look forward to a wider range of sustainable chocolate options that satisfy both their taste buds and their consciences.

While traditional chocolate will likely always have its place, these new alternatives represent an exciting development in the world of confectionery, promising a more sustainable and accessible future for chocolate flavors in various products.



PUMPKIN AND QUINOA SALAD

Yield: 4 Servings

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups cleaned, cleaned, washed, peeled and diced pumpkin
- 2 cups quinoa
- 2 cups spinach
- 2 tbsp. olive oil
- 1 tbsp. lemon juice
- a pinch of cinnamon
- salt and pepper to taste

AVAILABILITY Pumpkins are plentiful in October.

DIRECTIONS

Roast diced pumpkin with olive oil and cinnamon. Cook quinoa and toss with roasted pumpkin, spinach, lemon juice, salt, and pepper.

| Nutrition Facts | |
|--------------------|--------|
| Serving size | 1 cup |
| Amount Per Serving | |
| Calories | 230 |
| Total Fat | 8 g |
| Cholesterol | 0 mg |
| Sodium | 180 mg |
| Potassium | 550 mg |
| Calcium | 50 mg |
| Carbohydrates | 34 g |
| Fiber | 5 g |
| Added Sugars | 0 g |
| Protein | 6 g |

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

October

1

Sing-Along - Cheese Please
(to the tune of 3 blind mice)
Cheese, cheese, cheese - we love cheese.
Please, please, please - give us cheese.
We like white cheese oh yes we do.
Orange cheese tastes wonderful too.
Yellow cheese is for me and you.
Oh, give us cheese!

2

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4

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8

9

Salsa
Combine ¾ cup chopped sweet onion, ¾ cup chopped tomato, ¾ cup each canned black beans & corn rinsed and drained, ¼ cup chopped cilantro, a pinch of salt, 1 tablespoon lemon juice in a mixing bowl. Serve with baked corn tortilla chips. Discuss Hispanic culture and traditional foods.

10

11

12

13

COLUMBUS DAY
HOLIDAY

14

15

Introduce Tomato
I'm round and red; and juicy too; Chop me for a salad; Or dump me in your stew! Let children feel and taste a tomato. This activity is suitable for toddlers.

16

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Candy Corn Parfait
Let children layer the bottom of a cup with chopped mandarin oranges. Add another layer of chopped pineapple and top it off with a scoop of vanilla low fat frozen yogurt. Discuss the colors, fruits and taste with children.

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31

Phantom Floats
Fill glass half-full with grape juice. Add scoop of lime sherbet. Add ginger ale until glass is almost full. Stir. Spoon on a glob of whipped topping. Children will see the topping floating on top of the drink. This activity is suitable for toddlers.

Gender Disparities in Digestive Health: Understanding and Managing Common Conditions

Digestive problems can significantly impact quality of life, and women are disproportionately affected by certain gastrointestinal disorders. Research has consistently shown that women are more likely to experience digestive issues than men. This gender gap is influenced by several factors:

- **Hormonal Factors:** Estrogen and progesterone, the primary female sex hormones, can affect gut motility, pain sensitivity, and brain-gut communication. Hormonal fluctuations during menstruation, pregnancy, and menopause can exacerbate digestive symptoms.
- **Immune System Differences:** Women have a more easily activated immune system, which can contribute to conditions like celiac disease and inflammatory bowel disease.
- **Anatomical Variations:** The female gastrointestinal tract is slightly longer than the male tract, potentially affecting transit time and digestion.
- **Psychological Factors:** Anxiety and depression, which are more common in women, can worsen digestive symptoms.

Common Digestive Disorders Affecting Women

- **Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS):** A functional disorder characterized by abdominal pain, bloating, and changes in bowel habits.
- **Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD):** A group of chronic conditions that cause inflammation of the digestive tract, including Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis.
- **Celiac Disease:** An autoimmune disorder triggered by gluten consumption, leading to digestive symptoms and other health issues.
- **Functional Dyspepsia:** A chronic condition characterized by upper abdominal discomfort or pain.
- **Cyclic Vomiting Syndrome:** A recurring disorder characterized by episodes of nausea, vomiting, and dry heaving.
- **Motility Disorders:** Conditions affecting the movement of food through the digestive system, such as gastroparesis and chronic constipation.

Dietary Solutions to Manage GI Disorders in Women

Managing digestive disorders involves a proactive approach to nutrition and lifestyle habits. Here are evidence-based dietary solutions that can support digestive health for women:

1. Increase Fiber Intake

A diet rich in fiber is essential for promoting a healthy gut microbiome, which can reduce the risk of developing GI disorders. Fiber-rich foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, and nuts help feed the good bacteria in the gut, contributing to overall digestive health. This is particularly important for managing conditions like IBS, where gut bacteria may play a role in symptom severity.

- **Key Tip:** Start with soluble fiber sources like oats, apples, and carrots, which are gentler on the digestive system, before introducing more insoluble fibers like whole grains and leafy greens.

2. Incorporate Lean Proteins

Protein is important for tissue repair and overall health, but some high-fat animal proteins can be difficult to digest. Instead, opt for lean protein sources like chicken, fish, eggs, and plant-based options like lentils and chickpeas. These proteins are easier to digest and less likely to trigger GI discomfort.

- **Key Tip:** Try incorporating small amounts of protein throughout the day to prevent bloating or digestive distress that can occur with larger meals.

3. Stay Hydrated

Proper hydration is essential for digestion, especially for women experiencing slower GI motility or constipation. Water helps move food through the digestive tract and aids in nutrient absorption. Avoid sugary drinks and caffeine, which can worsen symptoms in people with IBS or acid reflux.

- **Key Tip:** Drink water throughout the day, and if you experience constipation, try adding a glass of warm water with lemon in the morning to stimulate digestion.

4. Avoid Trigger Foods

Highly processed foods, sugary snacks, and foods high in saturated fats can exacerbate GI disorders. Women with IBS or IBD should also be mindful of potential trigger foods like dairy, gluten, and certain artificial sweeteners, which can irritate the digestive system.

- **Key Tip:** Keep a food diary to track which foods might be triggering symptoms, and eliminate or reduce them from your diet gradually.

5. Probiotic-Rich Foods

Probiotics can help balance the gut microbiome and support digestion. Foods like yogurt, kefir, sauerkraut, and kombucha are excellent sources of probiotics. Including these foods in your diet may help alleviate symptoms of GI disorders by increasing the levels of beneficial bacteria in the gut.

- **Key Tip:** Introduce probiotic foods slowly, as a sudden increase may cause temporary bloating or gas.

By understanding the unique factors that contribute to digestive problems in women and implementing these strategies, individuals can effectively manage their symptoms and improve their overall quality of life.



COLLARD GREENS AND WHITE BEAN STEW

Yield: 4 Servings

INGREDIENTS

- 1 lb. cleaned, washed and chopped collard greens
- 1 16 oz. can drained white beans
- ½ cup diced yellow onion
- 2 cloves minced garlic
- 1 cup vegetable broth
- 2 tbsp. olive oil
- 1 tbsp. lemon juice

AVAILABILITY Collard greens are in season.

DIRECTIONS

Sauté onions and garlic in olive oil. Add chopped collard greens, white beans, and broth. Simmer until greens are tender and stew thickens. Add lemon juice before serving.

Nutrition Facts

| Serving size | 1 cup |
|--------------------|--------|
| Amount Per Serving | |
| Calories | 210 |
| Total Fat | 5 g |
| Cholesterol | 0 mg |
| Sodium | 300 mg |
| Potassium | 700 mg |
| Calcium | 150 mg |
| Carbohydrates | 28 g |
| Fiber | 7 g |
| Added Sugars | 0 g |
| Protein | 8 g |

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

November

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

Sing-Along - Carrot
Orange is my color.
I stand long and lean.
In the garden you'll see
Just my bright leaves of green.

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

VETERANS DAY
HOLIDAY

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

Turkey Fruit Cup
Hollow half an orange.
Fill with orange pieces.
Insert lettuce leaf at back
for feathers, a carrot slice for
head, broken toothpick for
nose and raisins for eyes.
Attach with toothpicks.

23/30

24

25

26

27

28

29

THANKSGIVING DAY
HOLIDAY

DAY AFTER
THANKSGIVING
HOLIDAY

Budget-Friendly Plant-Based Protein Sources

We do not have to consume meat and animal products to intake adequate protein in our daily diets. There are a variety of nutrient-dense, tasty, plant-based protein options that can help us to “build muscle” on a budget! With the higher food prices these days, all of us are looking for ways to stay healthy with less dollars available. Guess what? It is possible. Here are some great options!

1. Legumes are high in protein and fiber. Here are some good choices:

- **Lentils** come in a variety of sizes and colors, and are a wonderful addition to soups, stews and salads.
- **Chickpeas** are versatile and make a great staple for curries, salads and hummus.
- **Black Beans** taste delicious with rice, in tacos, burritos and salads.

2. Tofu and Tempeh

- **Tofu** is condensed soy milk; it is inexpensive and provides a plant-based protein source in soups, stir-fries or can be grilled.
- **Tempeh** is a fermented soy product that is higher in protein than tofu and can be used in stir-fries and sandwiches.

3. Peas

- **Green Peas** contain about 8 grams of protein for a 1 cup serving, thus are a great source of plant-based protein. Eat them as a side dish, or add them to soups, stews, rice or pasta dishes.
- **Split Peas** are a tasty, fiber and protein-rich choice that can be a base for soups, stews and hummus.

4. Nuts and Seeds are packed with protein, essential vitamins and minerals, fiber, can curb your appetite and are a welcome part of a heart-healthy diet. Here are some affordable choices.

- **Peanuts** make a great snack by themselves or in a trail mix.
- **Sunflower Seeds** are a great source of antioxidants, like Vitamin E and selenium, and can add a little crunch and nutty flavor to salads, pasta dishes or on oatmeal.
- **Pumpkin Seeds** are a better source of protein than most nuts, and are tasty on oatmeal, salads or toasted for a snack.
- **Chia Seeds** are high in omega-3 fatty acids, fiber and calcium. They are great in smoothies, puddings and oatmeal.
- **Hemp Seeds** are high in protein, Vitamin E, zinc, magnesium and iron. They can be sprinkled on salads or mixed in smoothies.

5. Whole Grains offer some great high-protein, high-fiber options, contain antioxidants, help regulate blood sugar, and assist in weight management:

- **Brown Rice** is hearty with a slightly nutty flavor, and pairs well with beans to make a complete protein.
- **Oats** are a wonderful, filling addition to baked goods (cookies and breads), contributes to a satisfying smoothie or oatmeal.
- **Quinoa** is a complete protein that can be used in salads, bowls, baked dishes or as an alternate grain to any meal.

5. Nut Butters provide a tasty addition to meals and snacks. The most affordable high-protein choice is peanut butter, and second is almond butter, both good sources of Vitamin E. These nut butters make a great sandwich, or addition to toast, smoothies, oatmeal, soups, sauces, salad dressings, desserts and baked goods.

By incorporating these plant-based protein sources into your diet, you can effectively support a healthy, nutrient-rich lifestyle without breaking the bank!



ROASTED ROOT VEGETABLE MEDLEY

Yield: 3 Servings

INGREDIENTS

Cleaned, peeled and diced vegetables:

- 1 cup carrots
- 1 cup sweet potatoes
- 1 cup beets
- 1 tbsp. olive oil
- a pinch of thyme
- 2 tsp. minced garlic

AVAILABILITY Root vegetables are widely available and inexpensive.

DIRECTIONS

Toss diced root vegetables with olive oil, garlic, and thyme. Roast in the oven until tender for a hearty, nutritious side dish.

| Nutrition Facts | |
|--------------------|------------|
| Serving size | 1 cup |
| Amount Per Serving | |
| Calories | 180 |
| Total Fat | 6 g |
| Cholesterol | 0 mg |
| Sodium | 220 mg |
| Potassium | 620 mg |
| Calcium | 50 mg |
| Carbohydrates | 28 g |
| Fiber | 5 g |
| Added Sugars | 0 g |
| Protein | 2 g |

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|--------|--------|--|-----------|---|--------|----------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 Pudding Jewel Prepare 1 box of instant vanilla pudding according to box directions. Add 1/4 cup drained pineapple chunks and 1/4 cup drained mandarin orange segments. Mix well and serve chilled. This activity is suitable for toddlers. | 5 | 6 |
| 7 | 8 | 9 Vegetable and Fruit Themed Ornaments Have children paste pictures of their favorite fruits and vegetables on a print out of an ornament. Have them decorate their ornaments to take home. This activity is suitable for toddlers. | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 CHRISTMAS DAY HOLIDAY | 26 | 27 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | December | | |



CHOCOLATE BANANA OAT BARS

Yield: 12 bars

INGREDIENTS

2 large ripe bananas (seasonal in South Florida)
1 1/2 cups rolled oats
1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder (or dark chocolate chips)
1/4 cup honey or maple syrup (optional for sweetness)
1/4 cup unsweetened almond milk (or any milk you prefer)
1 tsp vanilla extract
1/4 cup chopped nuts or seeds (optional, based on affordability)
Pinch of salt

AVAILABILITY Bananas, oats and honey are widely available and inexpensive.

DIRECTIONS

Preheat the oven to 350°F (175°C). Line an 8x8-inch baking pan with parchment paper or lightly grease it. Mash the bananas in a large bowl until smooth. Add the oats, cocoa powder, almond milk, vanilla extract, honey (if using), and salt to the bowl. Stir until all the ingredients are well combined. If using, fold in the chopped nuts or seeds for added texture and nutrition. Pour the mixture into the prepared baking pan and spread it evenly. Bake for 20-25 minutes or until the bars are set and slightly golden on the edges.

Allow the bars to cool completely before cutting into squares. Store them in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 3 days or in the refrigerator for up to a week.

Nutrition Facts

| Serving size | 1 bar |
|--------------------|--------|
| Amount Per Serving | |
| Calories | 110 |
| Total Fat | 3 g |
| Protein: | 3g |
| Fiber | 3g |
| Carbohydrates | 20g |
| Sodium | 30mg |
| Calcium | 20mg |
| Cholesterol | 0mg |
| Added Sugar | 3g |
| Potassium | 150 mg |



ONE PAN BAKED LEMON CHICKEN

Yield: 6 Servings

INGREDIENTS

6 chicken thighs (bone-in and skin removed)
2 large diced Russett potatoes
1 medium diced yellow onion
½ medium diced green pepper
2 lemons - 1 juiced and 1 zested
2 Tbsp. roughly chopped fresh parsley
2 Tbsp. olive oil or canola oil
garlic powder, onion powder, salt & black pepper- season to taste

AVAILABILITY In South Florida, peak season for lemons is November-April; Parsley is November-December and May; All ingredients are available year-round and are affordable.

DIRECTIONS

In a casserole dish, mix together diced potatoes, onions and green peppers. Season with salt and black pepper and lightly coat with olive/canola oil. Bake at 350°F (175°C) for 20 minutes. Remove the casserole dish from the oven and mix the potatoes and vegetables. Place the chicken in the dish and season with salt, black pepper, garlic powder and onion powder. Pour the juice of one lemon over the chicken, then sprinkle the zest of one lemon and 1 Tbsp. of parsley over the chicken. Bake at 350°F (175°C) for 20 minutes. Remove the casserole dish from the oven. Turn the chicken over and repeat the same process. Pour the juice of one lemon over the chicken, then sprinkle the zest of one lemon and 1 Tbsp. of parsley over the chicken. Bake again 350°F (175°C) for 25 minutes.

Nutrition Facts

| Serving size | 1 chicken thigh |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| Amount Per Serving | |
| Calories | 340 |
| Total Fat | 11g |
| Protein | 33g |
| Fiber | 3g |
| Carbohydrates | 28g |
| Sodium | 348mg |
| Potassium | 969mg |
| Calcium | 43mg |
| Cholesterol | 140mg |
| Added Sugar | 0 g |

NAVIGATING BODY COMMENTS:

Effective Responses and Strategies

Comments about a person's weight or appearance can be hurtful and intrusive. When it comes to commenting on someone's weight, the golden rule is simple: never comment on another person's body. Unfortunately, this boundary is often crossed, leading to uncomfortable and potentially harmful situations. Body image comments reinforce societal pressures that our appearance defines our worth, which is far from true. People's weight changes can be due to illness, medication, or emotional struggles—matters that are private and should not be judged.

Understanding the Impact of Body Comments

- Reinforces Harmful Stereotypes: Body comments perpetuate harmful stereotypes about appearance and can contribute to negative body image.
- Invades Privacy: Comments about someone's body are personal and should not be made without their consent.
- Can Be Harmful: Such comments can contribute to eating disorders, anxiety, and depression.

Effective Responses to Body Comments

- Ignore and Move On: Sometimes, the best response is no response. Ignoring a comment can defuse the situation and prevent further engagement.
- Change the Subject: Redirect the conversation to a different topic to avoid dwelling on the body comment.
- Set Boundaries: Clearly communicate that you do not appreciate comments about your body.
- Use Humor: A well-timed joke or humorous response can defuse a tense situation.
- Address the Commenter: If the comment is particularly offensive, consider addressing the person's behavior directly.





Additional Strategies for Dealing with Body Comments

- **Focus on Your Own Well-being:** Prioritize your mental and physical health, and engage in activities that boost your self-esteem.
- **Surround Yourself with Supportive People:** Build relationships with individuals who appreciate and accept you for who you are.
- **Seek Professional Help:** If body comments are significantly impacting your mental health, consider seeking support from a therapist or counselor.

Remember: Your body is unique and beautiful. Don't let negative comments from others dictate your self-worth. By setting boundaries and prioritizing your well-being, you can navigate these challenges with confidence and resilience.

COFFEE ANYONE?

Most of us like our dose of caffeine for a jump start in the morning, or to wind down in the evening with friends or family! Coffee is a staple in most American homes. According to the National Coffee Association, consumption of the caffeine-fueled drink has reached a two-decade high, with two-thirds of people consuming coffee each day. Research has shown health benefits of coffee consumption—a good source of antioxidants, reduction of inflammation in your brain, thus helping correct brain dysfunctions (i.e. Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, Huntington's disease, Epilepsy, Pain/Migraine, Depression, Schizophrenia) and can improve your mood! According to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2020-2025, it is safe to consume up to 400 mg of caffeine daily. There is about 300 mg of caffeine in 2-3 cups of coffee.

However, the price of coffee has drastically increased in the past couple of years, making it more difficult for many of us to maintain this tradition. Most of the world's coffee beans come from Brazil. This South American country has experienced extraordinary weather – first a drought and then a frost – that damaged a substantial portion of the coffee crops. Weather also affected crops in Colombia, another country that is a major contributor in the coffee bean industry. Factors like climate change have reduced the global supply of coffee. To date, the pricing has reflected these circumstances, but there is also concern for a shortage of upcoming crops that could thrust coffee prices even higher.

Purchasing whole coffee beans, and grounding them at home, seeking generic or store brands of coffee, or decreasing your overall coffee consumption, will save a few dollars on your grocery bill.





What about alternatives to coffee? Are there healthy, affordable options? There is more emphasis on these products recently, with the upward trend in coffee prices. Let's explore a few affordable options that can be found in the local grocery store or online.

Chicory Root - The roots of the chicory plant are dried and ground, and it is caffeine-free, offering a similar taste to coffee. It is also commonly combined with ground coffee. Chicory root has a high fiber content, can be beneficial to gut health, and contains antioxidants that target free radicals in the body, thus reducing inflammation. The cost is higher than coffee; however you need less product, so the cost comes out less per serving/cup.

Dandelion Root - The root of the dandelion plant is cooked, dried and ground into a caffeine-free powder, that can be consumed as a substitute for coffee. Dandelion root tastes similar to coffee, and is a natural laxative source, aiding in digestion. It is sold by itself, or mixed with other ingredients and is an affordable choice.

Matcha Tea - This is a highly concentrated uniquely vibrant green tea that usually comes in a powder form, from finely ground dried green tea leaves. Matcha green tea is very rich and savory, and has a higher caffeine content, so less is better. It packs a nutritional "punch", boasting:

- **Polyphenols** - aiding in weight maintenance, weight loss, metabolism, digestion, controlling diabetes, and fighting heart disease;
- **Catechins** - a polyphenol that is good for the heart, skin, memory and fighting cancer;
- **L-theanine** - an amino acid that helps reduce stress and anxiety, increase focus and immunity;
- **Antioxidants** - fighting diseases and cancer;
- **Chlorophyll** - a pigment rich in matcha green tea, that promotes the production of red cells, toxin absorption and anti-aging properties.

Check your local stores for the most affordable brands of matcha tea.

Other coffee alternatives are not as budget-friendly. Trying these selections listed above can offer some viable alternatives!

Remember, always do your research and check with a health care provider before adding or making any significant changes in your diet.



STAYING ACTIVE AS A FAMILY!

Staying active is just as important as eating a healthy, well-balanced diet. Both can be quite affordable as well. Regular physical activity should be an essential part of an overall healthy lifestyle for everyone- young and old. Exercise or activity doesn't have to be mundane, boring, or something you dread doing. Find fun activities to do together as a family!

The Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, issued by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), recommends for adults 150-300 minutes (2 ½ - 5 hours) of moderate-intensity (i.e. brisk walking, bicycle-riding, swimming, baseball, mowing the lawn or raking the yard), or 75-150 minutes (1 hour 15 minutes- 2 ½ hours) of vigorous- intensity (i.e. jogging/running, martial arts, basketball, soccer, swimming laps, heavy yard work, participating in a strenuous fitness class, carrying heavy load of groceries or other items upstairs) aerobic physical activity per week. A mix of both types, spread throughout the week, is desirable. As a general rule, aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity a day for adults. In addition, muscle-strengthening activities (that involve all major muscle groups- i.e. push-ups or weight-lifting) are recommended 2 or more days per week. Children and adolescents ages 6 through 17, are recommended to engage in 60 minutes (1 hour) or more of moderate to vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity daily, with vigorous-intensity activity at least 3 days a week. Included in this physical activity, children and adolescents should engage in at least 3 days of muscle-strengthening and 3 days of bone-strengthening (i.e. running, jumping rope, basketball) activities. For children ages 3 through 5, they should stay physically active throughout the day, with active play encouraged. As

always, anyone with any chronic health conditions or disabilities, should consult with a health care provider before engaging in any physical activity.

Don't look at these guidelines as impossible to reach- they are not! Instead of fitting one 30-minute walk during the day, try three 10-minute walks instead, if this is more attainable. What is most important is making regular physical activity part of a healthy lifestyle!

Following these guidelines will ensure overall health benefits: loss of weight if needed or maintaining a healthy weight; decreasing risk of chronic health conditions and certain cancers; improving heart health; improving bone health; improving brain health and cognitive function; maintaining blood pressure, blood sugar, triglyceride and cholesterol at normal levels; increasing energy levels; improving mental health- decreased anxiety and depression; improving sleep and overall quality of life! Remember, any amount of physical activity is better than none at all. Sit less and move more!

Fitting in physical activity does not mean breaking the bank. Exercise in your own home or neighborhood, or engage in other budget-friendly activities. Here are some ideas to do individually, or together as a family:

- **Take a walk or jog in your local neighborhood**
- **Follow an exercise video or routine online or from a workout app on a smart phone**
- **Play basketball in the driveway or at a local park, or jump rope outside**
- **Create a budget-friendly home gym using hand weights, kettlebells, resistance bands and a yoga mat**
- **Dance to your favorite music**
- **Do gardening (grow your own fruit, vegetables or herbs) or yard work**
- **Put some music on and walk briskly around the house or up and down the stairs for 10- 15 minutes, 2-3 times per day**
- **Do strength-training exercises that do not require any equipment- push-ups, sit-ups, squats, lunges, planks, etc.**
- **Take the stairs whenever possible instead of an elevator or escalator**
- **Visit local parks and outdoor venues, with free or inexpensive admissions and parking fees**
- **Research local fun, budget-friendly activities and events**

There are so many affordable ways to keep moving, there is no reason to fit stress into the equation. Make it fun and stay active as a family!





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