

Shopping Solutions for Healthful Eating



Consumers today have many choices when it comes to food, especially at the grocery store. With over 30,000 items and numerous brand names, how does one go about choosing foods that are enjoyable, affordable and that provide proper nutrition? Here are some supermarket shopping solutions to help select the most nutritious food options in all aisles of the store easily and quickly.

The List

Before you head out to the supermarket, take the time to make a list. It will save you time, money and headaches.

- 1. *What's to eat this week?*** List out meal ideas for the week, keeping in mind which days you'll have time to cook from scratch and which days you'll be pressed for time to put dinner on the table. When time is short, opt for convenience items and couple a frozen entrée with ready-to-eat produce. And be creative! If you know to plan for pizza one night, shop for salad, milk and fruit to balance out the meal.
- 2. *Organize the list.*** As you create your shopping list, check your menu options against MyPyramid to ensure you've remembered everything from protein to produce. This will help ensure you are purchasing a variety of foods that provide all of your nutrient needs.
- 3. *Beyond the basics.*** Don't forget snacks! Everyone enjoys a little boost between meals, so stock the kitchen with nutritious, great tasting options such as low-fat popcorn, nuts, and fresh fruit.

The Strategy

- Don't go grocery shopping when you are hungry. Leave the decisions to your head, not your stomach. It's easier to stick to the list if you are not hungry, so plan to make sure to eat something before you go.
- Set a routine. Establish a day and time that makes it easy for you to move quickly and easily through the store and stay focused on your shopping needs.
- Save money. Coupon clipping or finding stores that price match are great strategies for saving money. Coupons are also a great way to expand your food choices. Use a coupon to experiment with a new meal item that you wouldn't normally purchase.
- Kids in tow? An enjoyable grocery shopping experience with children is possible! Use it as an opportunity to give your kids a lesson in color, smell and names of new foods. Engaging them in the food selection can turn a trip to the store into a great teaching tool about nutritious food choices.

The Labels

The food label can be a consumer's best shopping tool. Use the label to compare nutrients and ingredients between similar products and determine which nutrients the food contributes to your total diet.

Choosing Healthy Foods, Aisle by Aisle

Knowing how to shop and what to look for in each aisle/section of the store helps guarantee a cart stocked with healthful products. Here are a few simple tips to help you ace the aisles:

- ❑ **Produce** Stock up on fruits and vegetables. They are rich in vitamins, minerals, fiber, color and flavor, yet low in fat and calories. Frozen produce is a nutritious alternative when your favorite produce is out of season. Also consider dried and canned fruits without added sugar.
- ❑ **Protein** Meat, fish, chicken, turkey, eggs, tofu: These foods are sources of high-quality protein. Choose lean cuts of meats by comparing nutrition information on the package.
- ❑ **Milk, cheese, yogurt** These foods are excellent sources of calcium in your diet. Choose low-fat or nonfat versions of these foods to get the benefits of the calcium but not the extra calories and fat. If you cannot tolerate lactose, keep in mind that you still may be able to tolerate cheese and yogurt. Lactose-free milk or fortified soy milk are great alternatives to regular milk.
- ❑ **Frozen** Fresh foods are usually more nutritious, but frozen foods can be helpful when you're short on time. Use nutrition labels to compare frozen prepared meals and entrees. You'll find that the calorie, fat, and sodium content of different brands can vary quite a bit.
- ❑ **Bread, cereal, pasta, rice** Your choices within this food group can make the difference between a high fiber diet and a low-fiber diet. Opt for whole-grain products whenever possible—such as whole-wheat bread and pasta, oatmeal, and brown rice—to boost your fiber and mineral intake.
- ❑ **Legumes, lentils, nuts** There are a wide variety of legumes, both dry and canned, available in the supermarket. Pinto, kidney or black beans provide fiber, folate and protein. Nuts and peanut butter contain monounsaturated fats, vitamin E, selenium and protein.
- ❑ **Canned foods** Canned fruits and vegetables are great to have on hand because they are similar and sometimes higher in nutrients than their fresh counterparts. Choose no-added-salt or low-sodium versions when possible to keep your sodium intake moderate (< 2400 mg/day).

