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## How to eat healthy on a low budget south africa

Avoid using convenience foods as you pay for the convenience. Rather cook meals from scratch, cook in bulk and freeze meals to save both time and money. Planning is key Plan your meals in advance and make a shopping list and stick to the list. By doing this you won't buy unnecessary food items. Your wastage will also be less because you have planned meals using the items that you purchased. Buy bulk Buy certain non-perishables in bulk, saving on packaging costs and reducing your trips to the supermarket. Basic food items that can be bought in bulk include pasta, rice, oatmeal, dried fruit, nuts, seeds, cereals, tinned foods and beans. Shop seasonally Always shop for produce that is in season for the best prices. Food packages may state when a food is in season. Alternatively, there are charts available online you can refer to. Less expensive fruits and vegetables to look out for are apples, bananas, oranges, nectarines, sweet melon, cabbage, carrots, pumpkin, butternut, tomato, onions and spinach. Purchasing them whole and not pre-cut is also less expensive. Pro plant proteins Add vegetable sources of protein, such as lentils, beans and chickpeas, to your meat dishes to stretch the meal, as meat is often the most expensive part of a grocery bill. Extending this purchase to serve more meals can make a big difference. Try adding chickpeas to a Chicken à la King, beans to a stew, or lentils to Cottage Pie. Meat-free meals Plant-based proteins are much more affordable than meat, chicken or fish. Start with one dinner a week being meat-free and slowly increase from there. Delicious vegetarian meal ideas are Mexican bean bowls, chickpea mushroom stroganoff, bean burgers, lentil dhal, bean and butternut curry and more. Pack lunch Take a few minutes every evening to pack a healthy lunch and snack box for yourself and the family. Some examples are a tuna sandwich with lite mayo and a handful of cherry tomatoes, or a ham and mushroom omelette or chickpea curry with brown rice. Snack wisely Snacks, such as granola bars, chips, chocolates, and sweets, can add up quickly and cost more than fresh food. Rather snack on fresh fruit, boiled eggs, veggie sticks, like carrot or cucumber, and homemade popcorn. Frozen is fine Frozen vegetables are still rich in vitamins, mineral, fibre and low in calories. There is not a notable difference between fresh and frozen composition. The key is how you cook the frozen veg. If you over-cook the vegetables, they will lose their nutrient value. Be water wise Drinks can be the fastest and sneakiest way to increase grocery spend. Avoid drinking fruit juices, cold drinks, and energy drinks. Aim to drink water most of time, as it's free. Still need convincing? Maybe you still aren't quite convinced about healthy eating on a budget. Let's crunch some numbers. A bought lunch of a burger, packet of chips and a snack bar can cost you about R40-R80. A homemade egg mayonnaise sandwich with a fresh apple and homemade popcorn will cost you R9-R12 in total. It's possible to eat healthier on a budget with effort and planning. Last updated on Jul 7th, 2020 at 04:10 pmEating well shouldn't be stressful. Discovery Vitality dietitian Terry Harris shares her tips to help you eat healthy on a budget This is the last in our series on nutrition and women's health, in honour of Women's month in South Africa. Each week, we've shared information and guidelines to better inform you about your everyday food choices and offer tips to make healthy eating tasty and more convenient. Now that it's the end of the month, we have tips to help you stay healthy and save on that grocery bill if your purse strings are tight. Eating healthily doesn't have to cost a fortune. In fact, says Discovery Vitality dietitian Terry Harris, it can be quite cost-effective if you plan well. Follow these tips to cut back on spending while still putting your and your family's health first: Shop smart Make a grocery list of what you need before you go to the grocery store and stick to it! Not shopping when you are hungry helps prevent impulse buys. Buy fruit and vegetables that are local and in season. These are not only cheaper, but usually more flavourful too. Check the packaging for the country of origin and if it's in season. Be sure to buy only what you can use before it spoils. If you have the freezer space, stock up on plain frozen vegetables. They are just as healthy for you as fresh, are often more convenient as they are usually pre-cut, and may cost less, as well as last much longer. Buy vegetables in bulk, and prepare and freeze large batches of meals in individual portions. Buy whole fruits and vegetables; pre-cut fresh produce loses more nutrients, and slicing and chopping is good for toning your arms (but a food processor makes chopping and slicing a breeze!) Purchase fresh fruits and vegetables by the bag, not by the piece, as this is more cost-effective. Choose porridges, like oats or sorghum, for breakfast. Buy plenty of dried whole grains, like barley, brown rice and bulgur wheat that are more cost-effective and will go a long way. You can use these in a variety of soups, stews, pasta and warm or cold salads. Try this nut dusted pilaf/pilau for a creative way to use brown basmati rice. Look out for specials and buy items like canned and dried legumes, canned fish, raw, unsalted nuts or high-fibre cereal in bulk when that is cheaper. When you choose fresh produce, take the pack with the latest sell-by date so it lasts longer. Fresher produce is usually packed at the back of the shelf and the older stock in the front. In addition, look high and low when scanning a shelf of food products. The most expensive items and ones being promoted the most are usually placed at eye level, in between shoulder and waist height for the average person. More affordable products will usually be below knee height or set high above eye level. Ready-to-cook meat (for example marinated, boneless meat) is far more expensive than plain meat. Buy your meat plain, and skin, de-bone or season it yourself at home. Buy the family-sized or value pack and freeze what you don't use immediately. Grow your own herbs. Fresh herbs add amazing flavour to even the simplest of dishes but it can be pricey to buy a variety of herbs at the supermarket. Growing your own herbs at home is inexpensive, easy and ensures that you always have a mix of fresh herbs available. Cook smart Buy fewer takeaway foods and cook more at home. Not only do takeaway foods and convenience meals tend to be high in salt, fat, sugar and kilojoules, but they are also pricier than home-cooked meals. Add plant-based proteins to meat dishes to extend the volume of the meal - such as adding lentils to savoury mince. Cook meals in bulk and freeze them so you can use these meals on busy days instead of ready-made convenience options. Save on electricity costs by including more meals in your week that do not require cooking, such as salads. Add canned tuna to this corn, red pepper and onion salsa for a quick, tasty meal. Dedicate one night a week to preparing a meal using only leftovers or food close to its expiry date. 5 Ways to reduce food waste Regularly binning expired or unused food can waste a lot of money, says Harris. She suggests these five ways to cut down on food wastage: Store food correctly. For instance, some fruits (like bananas) give off ethylene gas as they ripen, which can cause other produce around it, such as your leafy greens, to rot faster. Serve appropriate portions to avoid having to throw away uneaten food. Reinvent dinner leftovers for lunch the following day. Be realistic about what you buy, and get just what you need. Keep your pantry, fridge and freezer neat and tidy so you can see which foods need to be eaten first - follow the 'first in, first out' principle. Is it healthy to cut carbs? Eat smart Get into the habit of drinking plain water when you're thirsty instead of buying bottled drinks. Tap water is easy on your wallet and has no kilojoules. A reusable water bottle is a great way to have water with you on the go and is kinder to the environment. Avoid altogether or cut back on unhealthy snacks. Opt for cheaper proteins in your diet. Legumes, such as kidney beans, split peas, and lentils, are highly affordable, highly nutritious, good-quality protein sources. Commit to regularly using these great sources of protein for main or side dishes. "Meat is usually among the most expensive items in your shopping list, and you can save a lot of money over the long run just by eating vegetarian a few times a week," suggests Harris. "Lopping your vegetable and legume intake is also highly beneficial for you and your family's health, so expand your cooking repertoire with some wholesome and filling meat-free meals." Seafood doesn't have to be expensive - try buying canned tuna, salmon, or sardines - they store well, are a low-cost option, and are ideal for flaking into salads or preparing fish cakes with Eggs are another great low-cost option and are easy to prepare. Choose cheaper wholegrains as a carbohydrate source, such as barley, brown rice, and bulgur wheat. When eating out, save money and avoid overeating by splitting the meal with a friend. By following a balanced, nutritionally sound diet, you'll lower your risk of lifestyle-related chronic conditions like heart disease, type-2 diabetes and certain cancers - and in this way, save on potential medical expenses in the future. Coupling a healthy diet with adequate physical activity will also help you lose excess weight: which is key, as the 2017 Vitality ObeCity Index reports that being obese increases healthcare costs by as much as R4 400, per person, per year. Good food choices coupled with enough physical activity are key to safeguarding your health for years to come. Harris concludes, "Our research has shown a reduction in body mass index (BMI) and health care costs as more healthy foods are purchased instead of unhealthy foods. The bottom line is clear - if you want to live a healthy and productive life, moving more and consciously choosing foods that will nourish your body are crucial." A money-saving experiment As an experiment, make a note of how much you currently spend on groceries and food for a month - this includes things like snacks and takeaway coffees. Then give as many of these tips a shot in the new month, and see how much you can save on your food expenses. Your wallet may well thank you for the relief - and your body too, for filling it with nutrients! Read more articles in this Women's Month series: While AllWomen endeavours to ensure health articles are based on scientific research, health articles should not be considered as a replacement for professional medical advice. Should you have concerns related to this content, it is advised that you discuss them with your personal healthcare provider.





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