

healthy eating



**CHEAP AND EASY**



**BRITISH  
COLUMBIA**

**Ministry of  
Health Planning**

# healthy eating

## CHEAP AND EASY

**E**ating healthy foods is one of the best things you can do for yourself and your family every day. When you eat well, you feel better. You have more energy. And you lower your risk of heart disease, diabetes and some types of cancer.

Many healthy foods like breads, cereals, fruits and vegetables cost less than other foods like chips and pop. So you can eat well without spending a lot of money or a lot of time.

That's what this booklet is about. It covers the basics of planning meals, shopping and preparing foods. It also lists some places in your community that can help you save time and money on food, and tells you where you can find recipes for healthy meals.

*For more information  
on healthy eating,  
call 1-800-667-DIET  
(732-9191 in the  
Lower Mainland) and  
talk to a dietitian.  
There's no charge  
for the call.*



# children

## NEED HEALTHY FOOD

*healthy eating doesn't mean forcing kids to eat things they don't like, or making them eat everything on their plate. The important thing is to feed them well, and help them learn about healthy choices, so they can do the same thing for their kids.*

Children need the right foods to grow and to stay healthy. They also need you to teach them how to eat well.

Eating well means getting enough foods from all four food groups:

- grain products (breads and cereals)
- vegetables and fruit
- milk and milk products like milk, cheese and yogurt, and
- meats and alternatives like chicken, fish, nuts, beans and peanut butter.

You can help your children eat well by:

- setting a good example
- eating healthy foods more often
- offering meals and snacks at regular times, and
- giving your kids a variety of foods at meals and snacks.



# planning meals

One of the best ways to make sure you eat well is to plan your meals ahead of time. Planning ahead can help you:

- get enough of all four food groups
- add variety, so you're not eating the same things day after day
- save money by buying only what you need
- use up foods that you already have on hand, and
- save time by shopping less often.



Planning is also a good way to get your kids involved in learning about healthy foods and making the right choices. Plus, they're more likely to enjoy eating foods they pick out themselves.

*...get your kids  
involved in learning about  
healthy foods, making the  
right choices and helping  
with food preparation safely.*

# budget tips

## FOR PLANNING MEALS

- **Think about healthy recipes you like.**
- **Look at grocery flyers and newspaper ads and plan some of your meals around things you like that are on sale, or seasonally less expensive.**
- **Build the main part of your meal from rice, noodles or other grains.**



Choose whole grain products more often. Use small amounts of meat, poultry, fish or eggs, and make sure you include some vegetables. For example, you can make a healthy casserole by mixing rice, vegetables and a small amount of meat or beans. Add grated cheese and you have all the food groups covered!

- **Add variety by trying new recipes.**

For example, if you normally make mashed potatoes, try baking them or making potato salad instead. It's a good way to make your family's meals more interesting.

Save time  
and money  
by planning  
for leftovers.

➤ **Save time and money by planning for leftovers.**

For example, if you're cooking chicken on Monday, plan to use the leftovers in a stir fry, a casserole or in sandwiches on Tuesday. You can also freeze leftover meats and use them later in soups or stews.

➤ **When you have extra time, cook in larger batches.**

If you find ground beef on sale and can afford the extra cost, make an extra big pot of chili or spaghetti sauce. Have some for dinner one night and divide the rest into meal-sized portions to freeze for later. Save large yogurt and margarine containers for freezing meals.

➤ **Plan for healthy snacks as well as healthy meals.**

Fresh fruits in season, raw vegetables, cheese, popcorn, crackers and whole wheat bread all make good, healthy snacks. They're also more affordable than candy or potato chips.

➤ **Plan for school lunches. Think of things to pack.**

Include fruits such as apples and bananas and vegetables like celery or carrots and other produce in season. Dinner leftovers (like pizzas and burritos) also make easy lunches. Pack them up and put them in the fridge when you're clearing up the kitchen in the evening.

For information about what produce is available seasonally, check out the Availability Chart at the Canadian Produce Marketing Association web site:

<http://www.cpma.ca/english/hns/avail.html>

# shopping

## ...before you go

- **Make a list of all the foods you need.** Do this in your kitchen so you can check what you have on hand.
- **Ask your kids.** For example, if you're planning to buy green vegetables, ask them what they'd like best. Broccoli, peas, green beans, spinach, lettuce, celery or cabbage? Give them a choice.
- **Look for grocery sales in flyers and newspaper ads for the stores where you shop.**
- **Save coupons for the foods you plan to buy.** But make sure you check other prices, too. *Coupons don't always give you the best deal. Usually "no-name" brands are cheaper.*

Ask your kids what they'd like best.

Broccoli, peas, green beans, spinach, lettuce, celery or cabbage? Give them a choice.

- **Have a good meal or a healthy snack before you go.** If you shop when you're hungry, you might be tempted to buy foods you don't need.

- **Find out about food buying clubs, cooperatives, and farmers' markets.** Check your community newspaper or call the nutritionist at the public health unit.

# shopping

## ...while you're at the store

- Ask about becoming a member for price deals. Ask about free delivery.
- Keep to the outside edges of the store. That's where most of the fresh food is found.
- Whenever you can, stock up on healthy, low-cost foods that keep well. These include rice, potatoes, noodles and frozen orange juice. Watch for case-lot sales.
- Stick to basics instead of prepared foods like frozen packaged meals and vegetables in sauces. Prepared foods may save you time but they cost a lot more.
- Try no-name labels or store brands. They are just as healthy but cost less.
- Buy fresh fruits and vegetables in season. Look for ones that are locally grown. They are fresher and usually cost less.
- Don't be fooled by big displays. Signs don't always mean there's a special price.
- Buy only as much as you need of foods that can go bad. Otherwise it is a waste of money.
- Choose foods that pack well for school lunches.



# tips

## FOR PRODUCT INFORMATION

- Compare prices on similar items.
- Look for the 'unit cost.' It shows you how much something costs (usually per 100 grams) so you can tell which size or brand is the best deal. Many stores show the unit price on the shelf below the product.

Tomatoes 794 mL \$1.69	= 21.3¢ /100mL
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Tomatoes 540 mL \$1.09	= 20.2¢ /100mL
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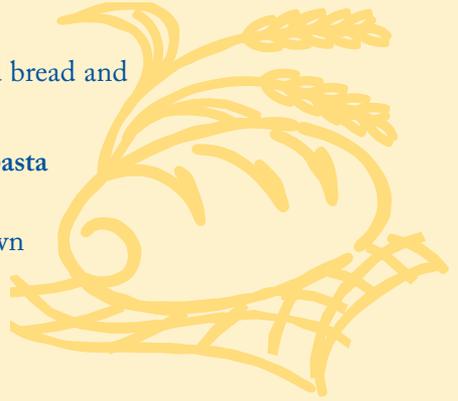
- Look for 'best before' dates furthest away to help you buy the freshest foods.
- Read the nutrition labels on packages. This can help you choose foods that are lower in fat and have more vitamins, minerals and fibre.
- Avoid foods that contain a lot of sugars. And remember, they don't always call it sugar or syrup. Glucose, fructose and other words that end with 'ose' mean sugar.

Remember... glucose, fructose  
and other words that end in 'ose'  
mean sugar.

# tips FOR SMART SHOPPING

## GRAIN PRODUCTS

- Look for bargains on day-old bread and bakery products.
- Buy plain rice, oatmeal and pasta instead of the instant and flavoured kinds. Add your own flavourings such as cinnamon or applesauce to oatmeal.
- Avoid fancy pasta shapes. They cost more than spaghetti or macaroni.
- Buy grains, pasta and cereals in bulk and stock up when they're on sale.
- Try brown rice and whole grain breads and cereals to make your meals healthier and more interesting.



## MILK AND MILK PRODUCTS

- Buy fresh milk, cheese and yogurt in the largest size you can use.
- Buy skim or 1% milk – except for children under the age of two. They should have whole milk.
- Avoid prepared products like grated cheese, cheese strings and yogurt in tubes. They cost a lot more.



## VEGETABLES AND FRUIT

- Buy fresh fruits and vegetables when they are in season.
- Don't buy mushy fruits or vegetables. Pick firm ones.
- Buy small pieces of fruit to avoid waste.
- Buy frozen fruit juice. It's cheaper and keeps longer in the freezer.
- Buy 100% fruit juice. Fruit drinks and fruit punch are mostly sugar and water.
- If you buy canned fruit, pick a kind that's packed in water or unsweetened juice instead of sugary syrup. Read the label.
- Buy large bags of frozen vegetables. Cook what you need and keep the rest in the freezer.
- Avoid buying frozen vegetables with sauces or flavours added. They cost a lot more. Add your own seasoning or sauce
- Avoid buying prepared raw vegetables like carrot and celery sticks. They cost a lot more. Buy them whole, and cut your own.

Buy fresh fruits  
and vegetables  
when they are in  
season.



## MEAT AND ALTERNATIVES

- **Avoid buying meats that come with sauces, stuffing or flavourings.** They cost more.
- **Compare meat prices based on the number of servings you get.** For example, a kilogram of beef short ribs serves two. But a kilogram of ground beef can serve up to 10 people.
- **Buy chicken backs and necks.** They are very cheap to buy, and give you enough meat for a big soup or stew.
- **Buy plain frozen fish instead of the kind with batter.**
- **Stock up on dry or canned beans, peas and lentils when you can.** They give you the same food value as meat – at a much lower cost, and have less fat. They keep for about a year.
- **Instead of buying stewing beef, buy a cheap steak** such as round steak and cut it up yourself.



Buy plain frozen fish instead of the kind with batter.

# tips

## FOR HEALTHY COOKING

- **Go easy on fat, salt and sugar.** You don't have to leave them out, just use less.
- **Cook vegetables so that they remain firm or serve them raw.** Don't overcook them.
- **Bake, broil, roast or steam your food.** Avoid frying.
- **Always cook ground beef to brown it and drain off the fat** before adding other ingredients.
- **Use herbs and spices for flavouring.** They're less expensive, quicker, and better for you than rich sauces or gravies.
- **Serve fruit for dessert.** You can add yogurt or ice cream. Or make a fruit crisp by putting oatmeal and sugar on top of sliced apples or peaches and baking them in the oven.
- **Take the skin off chicken or turkey before you cook it.** That way you eat less fat.
- **Save the water from boiled vegetables** and use it for soups or stews.
- **Ask for help if you need it.** Advice from family, friends, your local neighbourhood house or the nutritionist at your local health unit can help make cooking easier and more fun.



Use meat as a side dish,  
instead of a main course.

# tips

## FOR FOOD SAFETY

- Wash your hands with soap and warm running water before you handle food.
- Use hot, soapy water to clean cutting boards, knives and anything else that touches meat.
- Wash the countertop, cutting board or plate used for raw meats before using it again. Spray with a bleach mixture\* and rinse.
- Regularly wash dish cloths and towels with hot, soapy water.
- Thaw frozen foods in the fridge or microwave, not on the counter or "thaw" pads. Foods thawed in the microwave need to be cooked right away.
- Cook meat and poultry well. Juices run clear when well cooked.
- Cook fish until it flakes with a fork.
- Put leftovers in the fridge right away.
- Never reheat leftovers more than once.
- Throw away mouldy foods such as bread and cheese. These are not safe to eat.

\*Bleach Mixture:  
Combine 1 litre  
water and 5mL  
chlorine bleach in  
a spray bottle



# menu check

## MINIMUM NUMBER OF SERVINGS

### BREAKFAST

fruit – 1

grain product (breads & cereals – 1

milk product – 1



### LUNCH OR DINNER

grain product – 2

meat & alternatives – 1

vegetables & fruit – 2

milk product – 1



### SNACKS – FROM AT LEAST 2 FOOD GROUPS

e.g.:

- carrot sticks & plain yogurt dip
- oatmeal cookies & juice
- Cheese & crackers

# one dish MEALS

Vegetables	Meat and meat alternatives	Liquid ingredients	Grain products
About 1½ cups	1½ to 2 cups	1 to 1½ cups	1 to 1½ cups
mixed vegetables	tuna fish	cream soups: • broccoli	bread, cubed
tomatoes	canned meat	• celery	cooked rice
corn	cooked meat: • chicken	• chicken	cooked macaroni
green beans	• hamburger	• mushroom	cooked spaghetti
cooked and cubed: • squash	• lean sausage	cheese soup	cooked noodles
• zucchini	• pork	tomato soup	cooked barley
• potatoes	• turkey	tomato soup	cooked bulgar
broccoli	hard cooked eggs	shredded cheese plus milk	
peas	cooked lentils	evaporated milk	
cabbage	cooked split peas		
	cooked navy, pinto or other beans		

- 1) Choose one or more ingredient(s) from each list above
- 2) If you like, add other optional flavour: onions, spices, herbs.
- 3) Mix ingredients together.
- 4) Bake: place ingredients in a covered casserole dish. Add optional toppings: bread crumbs, craker crumbs, parmesan cheese. Bake at 350° for 45 minutes. Uncover last 15 minutes to brown topping. Serve hot. Or cook in large skillet on top of stove. Simmer till bubbly. Serve hot.

# food ideas

Most families have a few favourite recipes that they make again and again. Here are some ideas for making the basics more interesting, and more nutritious.

- replace half the white flour in any recipe with whole wheat flour
- double the beans in your chili, and use half as much meat
- add canned tomatoes to macaroni and cheese
- add tuna or celery to macaroni and cheese
- add fresh or frozen vegetables to packaged noodle soup
- add frozen corn or leftover cooked vegetables to chili, soup or stew
- add raisins or other dried fruits to cookies or muffins
- add raisins, grated carrot or canned pineapple chunks to grated cabbage to make a salad.
- cook twice as much rice or pasta as you need. Use leftovers in cooking or freeze.
- Slightly thaw frozen fruit, add milk and sugar, and mix with an electric mixer or blender (tastes like ice cream but costs less and has less fat).



# finding more ideas

## BOOKS

Phone your library to ask for "budget" or "low cost" recipe books such as:

- Eat Well for Less, *by The Corporation of the District of Burnaby*
- 100 Meals Under a Loonie per Serving, *by Nanaimo Community Kitchens*
- The New Thrifty Kitchen, *by the Surrey Food Bank Advisory Council*
- Many Hands: Community Kitchens Share Their Best (Recipes) *by Community Kitchens Publishing*



Also look for books on healthy eating at used book stores and thrift shops. Contact the nutritionist at the health unit for local resources.

## WEB SITES

(you can use a computer at most public libraries)

- Vegetables and Fruit Campaign [www.5to10aday.com](http://www.5to10aday.com)
- Dietitians of Canada [www.dietitians.ca/](http://www.dietitians.ca/)
- Dial-a-Dietitian Society of BC [www.dialadietitian.org/](http://www.dialadietitian.org/)
- BC Vegetable Marketing Commission – recipes using seasonal B.C. vegetables [www.bcveg.com](http://www.bcveg.com)
- BC Tree Fruits [www.bctree.com](http://www.bctree.com)
- BC Dairy Foundation [www.bcdf.org](http://www.bcdf.org)
- Shop Smart! Food Tips [www.consumer.ca/pdf/food.pdf](http://www.consumer.ca/pdf/food.pdf)



# community nutrition resources



There are many ways you can work with other people in your community to save time and money on food. The nutritionist at your local health unit is a good contact for more information.

- **Join or start a community kitchen.** This is a small group of people who get together once a month and cook three or four big batches of healthy, tasty food. Then they divide it up and take it home for future meals.
- **Go shopping with friends.** For basic food and household items you can buy in bulk and divide groceries between you. If you don't have a car, find a store that delivers.

If you don't have a car,

- **Check if there is a number to call about food resources** in your community, e.g. Grow-a-Row
- **Go on a grocery store tour** led by a dietitian. These are available at no cost in Overwaitea and Save-on-Food Stores
- **Get to know farmers** and local food available in your community. There may be farmer's markets or roadside stands for local foods.

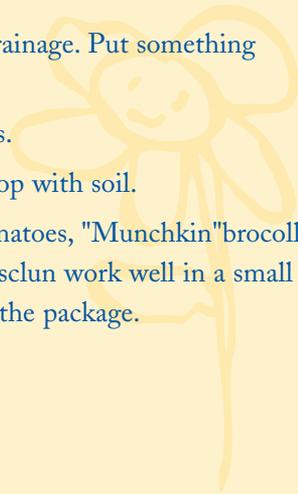
# gardening

- **Join a community garden.** This is a group of people who get together and grow their own fresh fruits and vegetables.

Call your local city hall or the parks and recreation department to find out if there's a community garden where you live.

- **Start your own garden.** You don't need a lot of space. A small balcony or even a sunny windowsill will do. Here's how to get started:

- Get some containers that will hold dirt and water. You can use plastic buckets, milk cartons, wooden crates or even an old dresser drawer.
- Punch holes in the bottom for drainage. Put something underneath to catch water.
- Line the bottom with small rocks.
- Fill the container almost to the top with soil.
- Plant your seeds. "Tiny Tim" tomatoes, "Munchkin" broccoli, Lemon cucumbers, Kale and Mesclun work well in a small garden. Follow the directions on the package.
- Water your garden.
- Make sure it gets some sun.
- Watch it grow!





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[www.gov.bc.ca/healthplanning](http://www.gov.bc.ca/healthplanning)