



## Food Finance: Making Dollars Count

### Your health is important.

Because the Youens and Duchicela Clinic believes this, the following is brought to you in an effort to provide wellness information that you can use to help manage and maintain your health.

### This week, the focus is on making frugal yet healthy grocery choices.

All consumers want the most for their money and that includes stretching dollars when it comes to meal and supermarket purchases. According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), \$1 of every \$5 spent in the retail market is on food. And those dollars have become increasingly precious in recent years as the cost of food has hit record prices, resulting from increases in energy and agricultural commodities.

High retail prices for food places consumers in a tough situation to try to get the most satisfying food at the lowest possible price, with fast food and ready-made dishes being easy purchases. But such food, while “cheap,” may not always be “better,” as these types of foods often contain the highest calories, the most fat, and the greatest amount of preservatives.

While many people equate healthy eating with high costs, this does not have to be the case. Stretching dollars does not mean having to sacrifice healthy choices. Frugal, nutritional food choices can easily be made, and incorporating such foods into one’s diet produces many health benefits.

Practical supermarket suggestions that yield nutritional yet cost-effective choices according to the USDA include

- choosing satiating foods over large portions.
- choosing several vegetables at meals, particularly canned ones (which tend to beat the lowest cost).



- choosing fruits including those that are canned (without added sugar) or dried.
- choosing whole grain products including pasta.
- minimizing the use of fats including dressings.

The USDA contends that planning meals and making a list prior to shopping are also effective in avoiding impulse purchases and unhealthy, expensive choices at the supermarket. Additionally, individuals can save money by

- choosing seasonal fruit.
- building the main course of a meal around rice, noodles, or other grains
- shopping items on sale for the week at a particular supermarket.
- using coupons (but only for necessary items that would be bought anyway). considering store brands.
- buying meat and produce in family-size quantities, which is often cheaper (but only if what is bought will not be wasted).
- inventorying what is available at home and minimizing food waste.

An added resource offered by the USDA to help shoppers is an electronic recipe finder index, accessible at [recipefinder.nal.usda.gov](http://recipefinder.nal.usda.gov). This electronic database of recipes can be searched in a variety of ways, including cost per serving or cost per recipe; this can help families make the most of their dollars spent.

**Remember: healthy eating has long-term benefits and does not have to be expensive.**

*The information provided here is not to be used as a substitute for medical attention. Remember that, should you have specific medical questions or desire more information, contact your doctor.*