

# Best Buys

## Using Canada's food guide

Use this resource to find more affordable food to meet a healthy eating pattern. A healthy eating pattern can be followed by filling half your plate with vegetables and fruits, a quarter with whole grain foods and the last quarter with protein foods. Making water your drink of choice is both healthy and cost saving!

## Vegetables and fruits

### Fresh vegetables and fruits

#### Save by buying:

- fresh vegetables and fruits in season
- root vegetables like potatoes, carrots, parsnips, turnips, sweet potatoes and onions
- apples, oranges and potatoes in pre-packaged bags rather than individually
- produce from the reduced section for better value, if you will use it up quickly
- small amounts to avoid waste if the produce ripens quickly

### Frozen and canned vegetables and fruits

#### Save by buying:

- frozen or canned fruits with no added sugar
- frozen or canned vegetables with no added sugar, salt, seasonings, breading or sauces
- store brand or lower priced brand name products



## Tips:

- Wash and cut your own fresh produce as it is less expensive than ready-to-eat produce.
- Cut up small amounts that you plan to eat within the next day.
- Try different recipes to use up fresh produce before it spoils.
- Add leftover cooked vegetables to soups, stews or stir-fries.
- Add frozen vegetables to casseroles, soups, chili or main dishes.
- Visit the food and nutrition section at <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/health/food-nutrition.html> to learn about safe food storage.

## Tips for kids:

- Avoid buying fruit snacks such as dried fruit leathers, roll-ups or gummies. These are high in sugar and can increase the risk of getting cavities.
- If you serve dried fruit, serve it with meals.
- Avoid offering 100% juice. Whole vegetables and fruits have more fibre, nutrients and less sugar than juice.

# Whole grain foods



## Tips:



When choosing whole grain foods, look for “whole grains” as the first ingredient in the ingredient list. For

example, “whole grain whole wheat,” “whole oats,” etc. Products labelled as “multigrain” or “organic” are not necessarily whole grain foods. Choose whole grains that contain little added salt, sugar or saturated fat.

### Save by buying:

- discounted bread that has tomorrow’s best before date. Freeze it right away for up to six months.
- plain hot cereals made with 100% whole grains. Pre-sweetened varieties and those that contain fruit and nuts cost more.
- plain brown rice, whole grain pasta, bulgur, buckwheat, millet and barley. Store in a well-sealed container in a dry place.

- Look for whole grain foods on sale.
- Store breads in the freezer rather than the refrigerator. Storing bread in the refrigerator stales the bread.
- Use bread that has lost its freshness for homemade croutons or bread crumbs.
- Add your own fruit and nuts to plain whole grain cereals.
- Add vegetables and seasonings to flavour whole grains, brown rice and whole grain pasta.
- The more processed the product, the more expensive they are (e.g., crackers, flavoured noodles or rice).
- Highly processed bakery products like muffins, donuts and croissants are expensive, offer less nutrition and are higher in salt, sugar and saturated fat.

# Protein foods



## Tips:

Canada’s food guide emphasizes plant-based protein foods; these also tend to be more affordable protein options.

## Plant-based protein foods



### Save by buying:

- legumes (peas, beans and lentils)
- dry roasted nuts and seeds without any added salt or sugar, in small amounts
- butters made from nuts, seeds or legumes
- tofu

- Buy canned legumes, with little or no added salt (sodium).
- Rinse canned legumes to remove any added salt.
- When preparing legumes from dry form, make a larger batch and freeze in small amounts to use in recipes in the future.
- Add legumes to soups, pasta sauces, chili, salads, stews, casseroles, burritos and tacos.
- Puree beans or chickpeas to use in dips and spreads.
- Spread hummus on the inside of a whole grain pita and fill with vegetables.
- Avoid nut and seed spreads with added flavours, cocoa, sugars, honey or jam.
- Make your own trail mix by combining your favourite whole grain cereal with a handful of nuts and seeds.
- Try tofu in a stir-fry, or use it to replace half the ground beef in meatloaf, chili or tacos.
- When buying soy beverages look for unsweetened fortified soy beverages.

**Important note:** Soy and other plant-based beverages are not suitable for children under two years old.

# Eggs, fish, poultry and meat

## Save by buying:



- unflavoured canned “light” tuna (rather than Albacore or white canned tuna), salmon and sardines packed in water. Compare brands to find the best buy.
- plain frozen fish. Fish sticks and battered fish are more expensive and higher in sodium and saturated fat.
- whole chickens. Cut them into smaller pieces yourself.
- unprocessed products. Pre-basted, pre-seasoned and pre-marinated products cost more and are higher in salt (sodium) and saturated fat.
- economical cuts of beef or wild game such as pot roasts, stewing beef and meat from blade, cross rib and shoulder cuts.
- lean ground beef on sale.



## Tips:

- Eat a variety of protein foods, starting at a young age.
- Use a slow cooker to cook pot roasts, stewing beef and meat from blade, cross rib and shoulder cuts.
- Cook ground beef with onions, garlic and other vegetables and freeze in small portions and put a date on it. This can be added to pasta sauces, chili, tacos, shepherd’s pie and more.
- Cook poultry and cut up into pieces and freeze to use for a quick meal later.
- Look for fish with higher amounts of healthy omega-3 fats such as salmon, herring, mackerel, sardines, rainbow trout, char, white fish and smelt.
- The bones in canned fish can be eaten and are a good source of calcium (mash bones finely for young children).
- Buy poultry with the skin on and bone in as it is less expensive. Remove the skin before serving as it is high in saturated fat. Boil the bones to make soup stock.
- Meat in bulk packages or family size may be less expensive. Check the price per kilogram to compare different packages.
- Boil eggs and take them along with you for a quick snack.
- Limit or avoid processed meats such as pepperoni sticks, hot dogs, sausages, ham, corned beef, beef jerky and other deli-meats. These are high in saturated fat and salt (sodium).
- Limit or avoid prepared lunch kits that are high in salt (sodium), sugar and saturated fat. Make your own using vegetables and fruits, whole grain foods and protein foods.



# Dairy-based protein foods

## Save by buying:

- unsweetened, lower fat milk in bags
- dry milk powder
- evaporated milk
- store-brand or store wrapped cheese
- tubs of unsweetened lower fat yogurt instead of multi-packs or smaller containers



**For more information:** Visit [www.unlockfood.ca](http://www.unlockfood.ca) or call Telehealth Ontario to speak to a registered dietitian for free: **1-866-797-0000**  
**TTY: 1-866-797-0007**



## Tips:

- You can freeze milk in bags for up to six weeks. Thaw in the refrigerator.
- Add dry milk powder to pasta dishes, soups, and stews to increase calcium, vitamin D and protein.
- Use lower fat milk or evaporated milk instead of cream to make recipes that are more nutritious, lower in saturated fat and less expensive.
- Grate or slice cheese yourself to save money.
- Buy blocks of cheese when on sale and freeze. Thawed cheese will crumble but it's just as nutritious.
- Use unsweetened lower fat yogurt in place of sour cream to cut down on saturated fat.
- Add your own nuts or fruit to unsweetened lower fat yogurt.

## Tips for kids:

- Breastfeeding is recommended up to two years and beyond.
- Children under two years of age need 3.25% MF (homogenized milk). Children two years of age and older can drink unsweetened lower fat milk (skim, 1% or 2% MF).
- Avoid sweetened or flavoured milk as these drinks are high in added sugar.



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