

Let's lunch and learn!

March 2026

If you participate in the State Health Plan, you can find a nutritionist near you by logging into your Aetna account.

Dietician visits are covered at 100 percent when an in-network provider is used. Visit www.shpnc.gov to learn more.

For future Worksite Wellness Lunch and Learn events or recordings of previous events, visit oshr.nc.gov/wellness-webinars.



A woman with long brown hair, wearing a light blue and white striped shirt, is seen from the side in a grocery store. She is holding a white shopping list and a black plastic shopping basket filled with fresh produce, including leafy greens and yellow lemons. The background is filled with various fruits and vegetables on shelves, including red apples, yellow lemons, and green apples. The scene is brightly lit, and the overall atmosphere is clean and organized.

Shopping Smart: Tips for Eating Healthy on a Budget

By Katie Godin, RD, LDN

LifeStyle
MEDICAL CENTER

Evidence-based Lifestyle Modification
and Medical Nutrition Therapy

Katie Godin, RD, LDN

- Lifestyle Medical Centers offers Nutrition Counseling to assist with educating you on how to make positive lifestyle changes alongside continual support and encouragement.
- **Services offered:**
 - Weight Management
 - Women's Health
 - Sports Nutrition
 - Chronic Disease Counseling
 - Bariatric Support
 - Smoking Cessation
 - Sleep Assessment and Stress Management
- <https://lifestylemedicalcenters.com/>



Have You
Ever Said
This?

*"I would love
to eat
healthier,
but it's just
SO
expensive."*



Can We Eat Healthy On a Budget?

Typically eating healthy is on average about \$1.50 more a day than eating the standard American Diet.

Focus on what you have control over :

- Does everything have to be Organic?
- Is shopping in bulk an option?
- Online shopping vs in store to reduce impulse buys?
- What about generic vs. store bought brands?
- Does planning ahead help?

Food For Thought...

- Unplanned purchases increase a grocery bill by 10% on average.
- People who eat out 6+ times per week spend over \$100 per person on food a month compared to someone who eats out 0-3 times per week.
- Store brand products are on average 25% lower in price than brand name products.
- Fruit can be 100% more expensive off season compared to when in season.



A cloth bag filled with fresh vegetables like tomatoes, mushrooms, onions, and leafy greens, set against a dark wood background.

Tips To Try For Smarter Shopping!

Tip #1: Plan Ahead!



Have a list and always check what you have before adding things to that list!



Have a meal planning day and try to stay consistent with it each week.



Keep lists of healthy meals you like and refer to it when planning.



Do not over plan! Count on leftovers or repurposing those meals.



Online shopping can be helpful for limiting those impulse buys. Lists also help if you are in the store.

Tip #2: Budget!

- Avoid Unnecessary Bargains. Think – will I use this?
- Coupons! Check online deals for the week.
- Prioritize convenience items. How are they best used? There are healthy convenience options that may help you avoid eating out. Is pre-chopped fruit necessary?
- And remember Tip #1 – planning is the best way to avoid unnecessary spending!





Tip # 3: Do NOT go hungry, rushed, or tired!

- When will you go?
- Schedule it! And stick to it!
- Smaller trips vs. larger trip?
- Consider Online shopping!



Tip # 4: Be strategic with HOW you shop!

- - Perimeter First!
 - Fresh Produce
 - Meat/ Fish / Dairy / Eggs
- - Frozen Foods
 - What are healthy items to include?
- Middle Aisles – Save for last!
 - Less ingredients the better.
 - Read labels!
 - Healthy items do exist!
 - Consider store brands!
 - This are tends to = more impulse buys!

Tip #5: Whole Foods Vs. Packaged Foods

- You are paying for convenience , packaging, and marketing with most foods in the grocery store. Sticking to whole foods can save you money and they are healthier!
- For Example:
 - Whole head of lettuce vs. bagged salads
 - Block of cheese / shred yourself vs. shredded cheese
 - Precut fruit / veggies vs. cut yourself
 - Prioritize your packaged foods. You can have a mixture but stick to whole food staples (Beans, Grains, Fruits, Veggies).



Tip #6 : Consider Frozen Fruits and Veggies

- Same nutrients
- Last longer
- Less expensive
- May have to get creative to enhance flavor!
- For fresh fruits/veggies, consider buying in season / seeking out farmers markets.

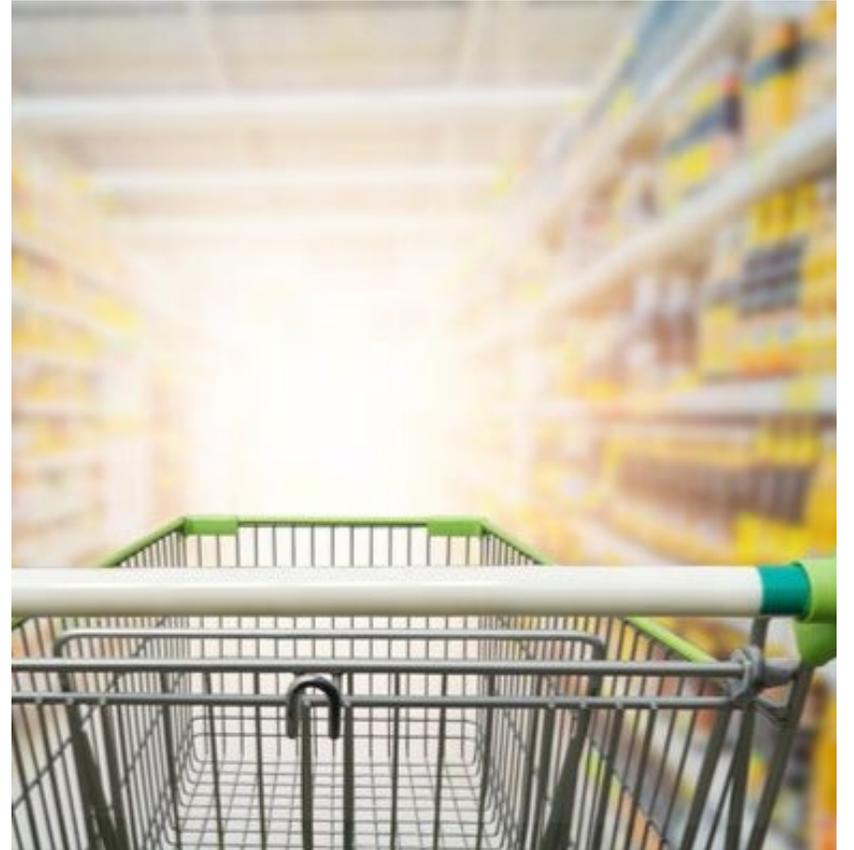
Favorite way to use fruit: In Smoothies!

Favorite way to use veggies: Mixed into bowls / pasta sauces/ soups!



Tip #7: Buy In Bulk When You Can

- What do you run out of quickly?
 - Milk
 - Fruit
 - Eggs
 - Meat (Also, consider meatless once/week!)
- Do have adequate freezer storage?
 - If not, prioritize how much you buy in bulk.
- Consider non-perishable pantry staples with long shelf life that you use often:
 - Oils
 - Nuts/Seeds
 - Oats
 - Canned items / Tuna
 - Beans



Tip #8: Reduce Food Waste

- Planning ahead can help with this.
- Proper storage of food is key (see link below).
 - Air tight containers help.
 - Avoid washing berries until ready to eat.
 - Banans/Apples/Tomatoes to be stored by themselves.
- Freeze leftovers.
- Prep produce as soon as you get home!
- Do not overbuy perishable items.
- Get strategic with repurposing foods if leftovers are not as appealing.

For further tips on food storage:

<https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/are-you-storing-food-safely>



Tip #9: What About Organic Foods?

- Try local foods as an option. Farmers markets (timing can be strategic at these as well. Later in the day = lower prices).
- Be selective – prioritize organic produce when you are consuming the skin of the foods. Refer to Dirty Dozen and Clean 15 lists.
- If you prioritize organic, plan to shop around / compare prices.
- Ask yourself , do you really need that organic packaged food anyway? Ex – Granola Bars, Chips, and other Baked Goods/Snack foods are not always the healthiest addition to the diet, even when they are marked organic.



Tip #10: Drink MORE Water!

- Beverages are pricey! And we don't drink enough water 😊
- If buying bottles, bulk is best.
- Get a water filter – cheaper than bottles and reduces plastic intake!
- If buying sparkling, go for generic vs. name brands.
- Creative ways to get water in:
 - Flavors (True Lemon products, Stir – squeeze flavor that is Stevia based)
 - Infused with fresh fruit / herbs.
 - Recipes: <https://thatsaladlady.com/blog/nutrition-wellness/infused-water-recipes/>



References:

- <https://nutritionsource.hsph.harvard.edu/strategies-nutrition-budget/>
- <https://www.lacapfcu.org/blog/food-budgeting-changes-summer>
<https://extension.usu.edu/nutrition/research/does-healthy-eating-cost-more>
- <https://www.getkalohealth.com/blog/grocery-shopping-budget-healthy-eating>
- <https://www.helpguide.org/wellness/nutrition/eat-healthy-for-less>
- <https://umaine.edu/foodrescuemaine/2021/07/12/shop-smarter/>
- https://extension.usu.edu/news_sections/home_family_and_food/food-waste

A vibrant landscape featuring a clear, bright blue sky. In the foreground, there are lush green trees with dense foliage, some showing small white flowers. The ground is a bright, sunny yellow field, possibly a field of wildflowers or a similar natural setting. The overall scene is bright and cheerful.

THANK YOU



Let's Cook!

High Protein Cottage Cheese Alfredo

[Cottage Cheese Alfredo | High Protein & Gluten Free](#)