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Making Choices for Your Health

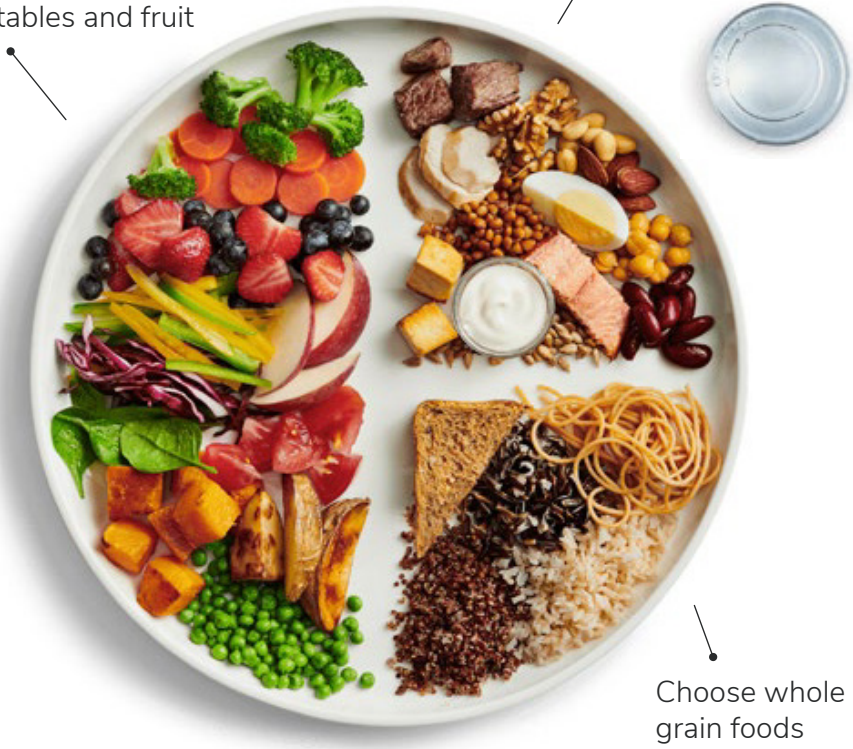
What you eat on a regular basis matters for your health. Cost may be on your mind every time you grocery shop but eating well doesn't always have to cost more. The information found in this booklet may help you:

- Eat a variety of foods each day
- Plan your grocery shopping
- Compare and choose items for the best buy
- Compare and choose items by using nutrition labels

Have plenty of
vegetables and fruit

Eat protein foods

Make water your
drink of choice



Choose whole
grain foods

Government of Canada, Canada's Food Guide: <https://food-guide.canada.ca>

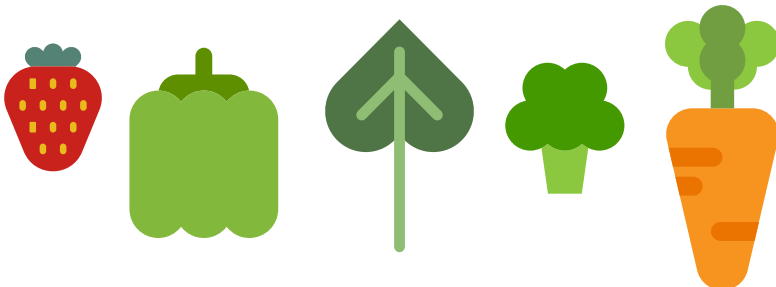
Have Plenty of Vegetables and Fruit

Vegetables and fruit are an important part of a healthy eating pattern. Aim for half of your meal to be vegetables and fruit.

Vegetable and fruits have fibre which can help you feel full, and prevent constipation and chronic diseases like obesity, Type 2 diabetes and some cancers.

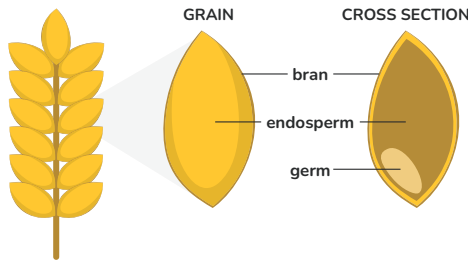
Tips to save money on vegetables and fruit:

- Buy fresh vegetables and fruit when they are in-season. You can freeze them to use later if you wish. For example, fresh berries will be more expensive in the winter months. During the winter, frozen or canned vegetables or fruit may be the best buy, and they are just as nutritious as fresh ones.
- Choose frozen vegetables in bags and cook only as much as you need. If you have the freezer space, larger bags of frozen vegetables and fruit may be less expensive.
- Add leftover or about-to-go-bad vegetables to soups, salads or casseroles.
- If you have space, try growing your own vegetables such as carrots and lettuce. If you don't have a garden, try planting seeds in pots on your windowsill or balcony. You may also be able to join a community garden.
- Harvest plants and pick berries when you can.



Choose Whole Grain Foods

Whole grain foods have important nutrients and include all parts of the grain: the bran, the endosperm and the germ. Refined grains, like white flour or pasta, only include the endosperm making them lower in fibre and lower in vitamins and minerals. Look at the ingredient list to see if a product is truly a whole grain.



Examples of whole grains:

- Brown rice
- Wild rice
- Whole grain pasta
- Whole grain bread
- Barley
- Oats
- Popcorn

Examples of refined grains:

- White rice, instant rice
- White pasta
- White and whole wheat bread
- White flour, all-purpose flour
- Cream of wheat cereal
- White tortillas
- White or whole wheat crackers

For pasta and bread products, read the ingredient lists and look for ingredients listed as 'whole grain'.

What does it mean?

- **Whole Wheat:** Whole wheat bread includes the endosperm and some of the bran. Whole wheat bread usually doesn't include all of the germ.
- **Multigrain:** Multigrain bread means there is more than one grain in the bread. This doesn't mean the bran or the germ is included.

Tips to save money on whole grains:

- Choose hot cereal instead of cold cereal. Hot cereals like oatmeal are a good buy. Instant hot cereals in single serving packages are convenient, but usually more expensive, more processed and can be high in added sugar.
- Look for discount stickers. Use discounted items right away or store them in the freezer for later.
- Cook with whole grains like barley, brown rice, and quinoa. They are nutritious and delicious.
- Compare prices to see if you can buy whole grain breads, crackers and pasta at the same or a lower price.
- Packaged, seasoned rice and pasta side dish mixes often contain more sodium and fat. These may cost more than plain rice and pasta. Try adding your own low-sodium spices such as pepper, oregano, dill or chili powder.
- Bake your own muffins rather than purchasing from the store. They cost less, are much lower in fat, and often taste better too!

How to include more whole grain foods:

- Start with something familiar. Switch to a whole-grain version of something you already eat. For example, try brown rice instead of instant white rice. Choose whole grain bread for sandwiches and toast.
- Purchase whole grains when they go on sale.
- Try adding barley, oats and brown rice to soups, salads and stir-fries.
- Use whole wheat flour instead of white flour, or mix half and half. You can also use ground-up oats to substitute for flour.
- Try air popped popcorn as a snack (it's a whole grain!). It's a great substitute for potato chips and pretzels.

Eat Protein Foods

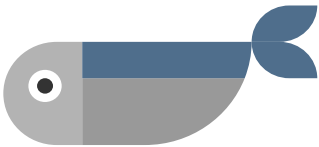
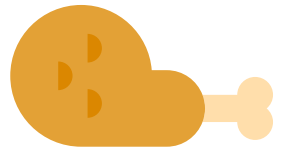
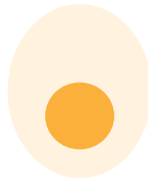
Protein foods include beans, nuts, seeds, eggs, milk, cheese, yogurt, fish, poultry and lean meats.

Foods such as milk, cheese and yogurt have nutrients that are important for strong bones and lowering the risk of bone disease. Some of these nutrients include:

- Vitamin D
- Calcium
- Magnesium

Lean meats, eggs, and fish provide important nutrients such as:

- Iron
- B vitamins
- Omega - 3



Tips to save money on protein foods:

- When buying cheese, buy in blocks and slice or grate it yourself rather than buying pre-sliced or pre-shredded bags.
- If cheese goes on sale, you can buy it in bulk and store it in your freezer.
- Try eating a few meatless meals each week such as: bean and rice casserole, cheese omelette, tofu and vegetable stir fry or vegetarian chili.
- Choose tougher cuts of meat. These are tender if you cook them slowly for several hours in water, soup or broth.
- Use wild game meat or fish when you can. They are even more nutritious than what is available in stores.
- Choose regular or lean ground beef. Brown it and then drain well to get rid of the extra fat.
- Buy larger cuts of meat or a whole chicken and cut it into smaller pieces yourself.
- Processed meat is very expensive compared to regular meat and are much higher in salt and fat. Cook a roast and slice it up and freeze it for sandwiches.
- Use canned tuna or salmon instead of fish from the store.
- Spread peanut butter or other nut butters on fresh fruits (apples) or vegetables (celery) for a simple snack.
- Boil leftover meat or bones to make broth for soups and stews.
- Avoid or limit processed meat including bacon, hot dogs, sandwich meat, sausages.

Make Water Your Drink of Choice

Water is a great way to quench your thirst and keep you hydrated. Remember that you need to drink more water in hot weather or when you are very active.

Try to:

- Limit sugary drinks such as pop, fruit drinks, iced tea and juice. These can be expensive and have more sugar than you think.
- Limit coffee and tea to a few cups each day or choose decaffeinated. Also, limit the amount of sugar, coffee whitener and cream you use, or switch to black.

Tips to save money on beverages:

- If possible, choose tap water over bottled water.
- Buy frozen containers of 100% concentrated fruit juice and add the water yourself.
- Milk is a nutritious alternative to water.

How to make water your drink of choice:

- Drink a glass of water with all your meals.
- Ask for water when eating out at a restaurant.
- Carry a reusable water bottle with you.
- Try a fruit and herb infused water or carbonated water if you don't like the taste of plain water.
- Try drinking bone broth.
- Drink water during and after exercise.
- Keep a pitcher of water in the fridge or on the kitchen table.



Shop Wisely

- Shop when you are not hungry, tired or thirsty.
- Try to shop only once a week. Extra trips to the store usually mean you will spend more money.
- Try to shop when stores aren't as busy so there is time to compare prices.
- Buy the foods on your shopping list first. If you have money left over, use it to stock up on non perishable foods on sale that you can use later.
- Only buy what you need and what you can use up. Food in large packages are sometimes a cheaper buy, but you will not save money if you end up throwing food away.
- Look for store brands. They usually cost less than brand names.
- Sometimes the most expensive items are placed at eye level to grab your attention and money.
- Check the sale area for some good buys. Just because an item has a discount sticker doesn't mean it's about to 'go bad'.
- Hunt, fish, or harvest food when you can.

Compare prices:

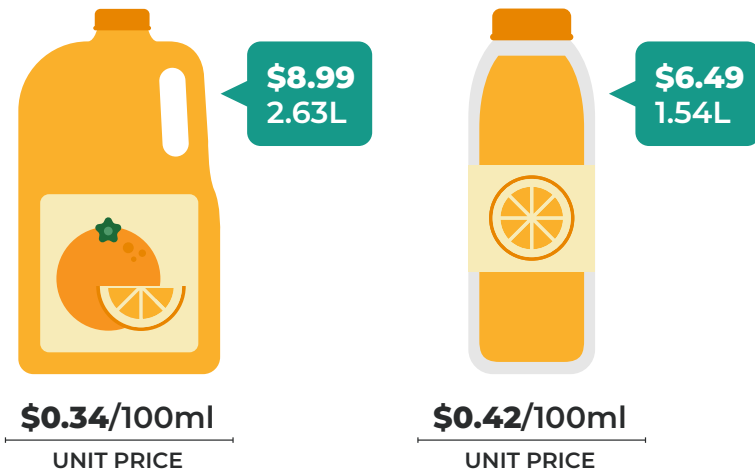
It can be difficult to know what the better price is when comparing two products. Some grocery stores will have a 'unit price' on the shelf price tag. Unit price is the best way to compare the cost of similar food items. The unit price tells you the cost per 100 gram, kilogram, pound, litre, or other unit of weight or volume.

When the unit price for both products is the same amount (e.g. per 100g) it is easier to compare prices. Here is an example using 2 different brands of cheese that have different weights and prices:

Cheddar Cheese	Unit price per 100g
Brand A: 500g package is \$8.99	\$1.76/100g
Brand B: 350g package is \$7.00	\$2.00/100g

Even though the price of Brand B is less expensive overall, Brand A cost less per 100g and is therefore a better buy because you get more for your money.

If your grocery store does not have the unit prices listed, you can find it yourself. Using a calculator, enter the cost of the food and divide it by the unit of measurement on the package. For example, using the Brand A Cheese, divide \$8.99 by 500g. You can then multiply by 100 to see the cost per 100 grams.



Menu planning tips:

- Make a grocery list based on your menu. Post a grocery list somewhere where it's easy to see. Family members can add items to the list.
- Store menu plans in a binder or folder to use again.
- Use leftovers for lunches or as part of another meal. For example, if you're cooking a roast chicken for Sunday night's supper and know there will be leftovers, then plan to make chicken sandwiches for Monday's lunch.
- Plan at least one meatless meal a week. Try using legumes (beans, lentils, dried peas), eggs, tofu, peanut butter and canned fish.
- Have "theme" nights for simpler meal planning (Meatless Mondays, Taco Tuesdays, Crockpot Wednesdays, etc).
- Look for sales in store flyers to plan your menu. These may be available online.
- If you live alone or with a small family, coordinate with a small group and share meals.

Sample one-week menu:

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
Breakfast	Scrambled eggs Whole grain toast Milk	Water Whole grain cereal with milk, topped with chopped nuts	Milk Oat Bannock Fresh, frozen or canned fruit
Snack	Fresh, frozen or canned fruit	Yogurt	Vegetables and dip
Lunch	Vegetable soup Canned salmon sandwich Orange Water	Leftover casserole Fresh fruit Milk	Leftover vegetarian chili Whole grain bread Yogurt Water and lemon slice
Dinner	Hamburger and rice casserole Carrots Apple oatmeal crisp	Vegetarian chili Whole grain bread Rice pudding	Mustard baked chicken Steamed broccoli Rolled oat cookies
Snack	Toast Apple with peanut butter	Crackers Canned fruit	Cold cereal with milk

WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Diluted fruit juice Whole grain cereal with milk Toast	Peanut butter and jam on whole grain toast Milk	Flavoured water Boiled egg Bannock made with oats	Water Whole grain cereal with milk A piece of fruit
Dried fruit and nuts	Fresh, frozen or canned fruit	Yogurt	Toast with peanut butter
Pea soup Whole grain bread Carrot sticks Milk	Leftover spaghetti Whole grain bread Yogurt	Leftover tuna casserole Carrot sticks Milk	Vegetable soup Cheese sandwich Milk Canned peaches
Whole grain spaghetti with meat (moose, caribou, or beef), and tomato sauce Microwaved frozen vegetables Fresh fruit salad	Tuna casserole Veggies and dip Banana muffin	Stir-fry with chicken Rice Fresh fruit in season	Take-out or frozen pizza Tossed salad Chocolate pudding
Yogurt with granola	Cold cereal with milk	Crackers Canned fruit	Apple Sunflower seeds

Read Food Labels

Food labels can help you decide which foods and drinks are best for you. Food labels can be used to:

- Compare and choose products more easily
- Know the ingredients of a food product
- Choose products with a little or a lot of the nutrients that are of interest to you

Here are the different kinds of information found on food packages.

Nutrition Facts:

Has information on serving size, calories, certain nutrients and % daily values (% DV).

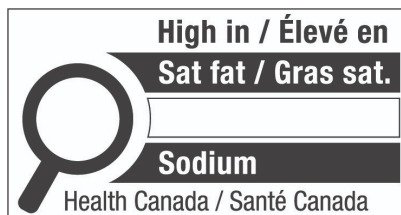
The % DV can be used as a quick guide to show you if the serving size has a little or a lot of a nutrient. Use the % DV to compare similar food products.

- **5% DV or less is a little**
Example: If a can of tomatoes has 4% DV of sodium, that is a little.
- **15% DV or more is a lot**
Example: If a can of tomatoes has 20% DV of sodium, that is a lot.

After comparing the sodium between these two cans, you can see that the first option with the lower sodium would be the better choice for your health.

Front-of-package Nutrition Symbol:

A front-of-package nutrition symbol is required on foods that are high in one or more of saturated fat, sugars, or sodium.



Front-of Package nutrition symbol

Ingredient list:

Show all of the ingredients in a food product by weight. The list starts with the ingredient that weighs the most and ends with the ingredient that weighs the least.

Ingredients: Whole wheat, wheat bran, sugar/glucose-fructose, salt, malt (corn flour, malted barley), vitamins (thiamine hydrochloride, pyridoxine hydrochloride, folic acid, d-calcium pantothenate), minerals (iron, zinc oxide).

The ingredient list above is for bran cereal. The ingredient in the largest amount is whole wheat, and the ingredient in the smallest amount is minerals.

Nutrition claims can be seen on some food packages. These claims can help you choose foods that contain a nutrient you may want more of. Look for these words:

- High source or excellent source. It might be written like: high source of fibre or excellent source of vitamin A.

A nutrient content claim can also help you choose foods that contain a nutrient you may want less of. Look for these words:

- Free, low, or reduced. It might be written like: low in sodium or trans fat free.

Nutrition claims can be misleading and only focus on one nutrient, so you still need to look at the Nutrition Facts table to make food choices that are better for you.

Food allergen labelling gives information to help you stay away from foods that you might be allergic or sensitive to.

Expiration dates and **best-before dates** are different.

An expiration date applies to certain foods that must meet strict nutritional standards. After this date, the product may no longer meet those standards, so it should not be bought, sold, or eaten.

A best-before date shows how long an unopened, properly stored product will keep its best quality, such as freshness and taste. It does not indicate food safety.

For more information on food labels, scan the QR code



Sample Nutrition Facts table:

Nutrition Facts Valeur nutritive	
Per 3/4 cup (175 g) / par 3/4 tasse (175 g)	
Amount Teneur	%Daily Value %valeur quotidienne
Calories / Calories 150	
Fat / Lipides 2.5 g	4 %
Saturated / saturés 2 g + Trans / trans 0.1 g	10 %
Cholesterol / Cholestérol 10 mg	3 %
Sodium / Sodium 85 mg	4 %
Carbohydrate / Glucides 27 g	9 %
Fibre / Fibres 0 g	0 %
Sugars / Sucres 21 g	
Protein / Protéines 6 g	
Vitamin A / Vitamine A	2 %
Vitamin C / Vitamine C	0 %
Calcium / Calcium	15 %
Iron / Fer	0 %
Vitamin D / Vitamine D	25 %
Riboflavin / Riboflavine	20 %
Vitamin B ₁₂ / Vitamine B ₁₂	25 %
Phosphorus / Phosphore	15 %
Magnesium / Magnésium	8 %

Yogurt A

Nutrition Facts Valeur nutritive	
Per 3/4 cup (175 g) / par 3/4 tasse (175 g)	
Amount Teneur	%Daily Value %valeur quotidienne
Calories / Calories 100	
Fat / Lipides 0 g	0 %
Saturated / saturés 0 g + Trans / trans 0 g	0 %
Cholesterol / Cholestérol 10 mg	3 %
Sodium / Sodium 70 mg	3 %
Carbohydrate / Glucides 6 g	2 %
Fibre / Fibres 0 g	0 %
Sugars / Sucres 4 g	
Protein / Protéines 18 g	
Vitamin A / Vitamine A	0 %
Vitamin C / Vitamine C	0 %
Calcium / Calcium	2 %
Iron / Fer	45 %

Yogurt B

These two yogurt labels show just how different two products can be! Use the Nutrition Facts table to help you make the best choice for you.

Step 1 – Check the serving size to compare

Step 2 – Look at the % Daily Value (%DV)

Step 3 – What nutrients are you looking for? Typically, you may want more fibre, vitamins and minerals and lower amounts of sodium, sugar, saturated and trans fats.

In this example both yogurts have the nutrition facts for the same serving size. This makes it easy to compare the 2 products and see which is the better choice.

Notice that while these are both yogurts, one has significantly more protein and less sugar.



Did you know? Listing some vitamins and minerals on labels is optional, so that is why they aren't always listed.

Store Food Safely

Storage instructions give information on how to keep food safe. They might include direction like: store in a cool, dry place, keep refrigerated or keep frozen. Storing food properly is an important part of keeping food safe to eat.

CUPBOARD	FRIDGE	FREEZER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breads and cereals • Canned foods • Dried peas and beans • Dry foods (white flour, pasta, rice, etc.) • Herbs and spices • Peanut butter and other nut butters • Unopened condiments (ketchup, mustard, relish, etc.) • Oil • Potatoes and onions (in a cool dark place) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milk, yogurt, cheese • Eggs • Uncooked meat, fish and poultry (can keep up to 3 days if properly sealed) • Cooked meat, poultry and casseroles that will be used in 1–2 days • Most fresh fruits and vegetables • Opened condiments (ketchup, mustard, relish etc.) • Butter, margarine • Whole grain or whole wheat flours • Most leftovers (can keep up to 2–3 days) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All foods purchased frozen • All fresh meat, fish or poultry to be kept more than 3 days (make sure all the food is properly sealed) • Bread (generally best if used within one month) • Milk (generally best if used within 6 weeks)

For more information on recommended refrigeration and freezing times visit Health Canada’s Safe Food Storage page by scanning the QR code



Consider Your Eating Habits

Healthy eating is more than just the foods you eat. It is also about how you eat.

Benefits of cooking more often:

- Learn new skills.
- Rely less on highly processed and packaged foods.
- Have more control of what you eat by choosing the amounts of sauces and seasonings you add.
- Make foods that you and your family like and will eat.
- Can tailor your meals to your family's nutrition needs.



Not a big fan of cooking?

Here are some tips to spend less time in the kitchen:

- Cook once, eat twice. Try to make enough for another meal.
- The same foods can be used for many meals. Chili one night turns into tacos the next and a topping for spaghetti another night.
- When preparing meals, cut up extra vegetables and fruits so you have some for snacks and meals the next day.
- Try batch cooking. Batch cooking means making meals in bigger batches and freezing them in meal-size portions.
- Keep your pantry stocked with commonly used ingredients, like canned fish, canned tomatoes, or whole grain rice.

Eating with others:

Enjoying foods with family, friends, neighbours or coworkers is a great way to connect and add enjoyment to your life. It can provide many benefits and contribute to a healthy lifestyle.

You can:

- Enjoy time together
- Share food traditions
- Explore new foods that you might not normally try

You could:

- Plan a breakfast with friends
- Attend community celebrations
- Start a regular community meal with your neighbours
- Have lunch with a coworker at work or friend at school
- Ask a local organization about groups or cooking classes you could join
- Swap meals and share recipes
- Share your harvested food

Eat Mindfully

Eating well for less is about more than just the cost of food.

Eating mindfully means being aware of why you eat, or what you ate. This helps you better understand why you eat the way you do, which can then help with making healthy changes to your eating habits. Mindful eating may also save on food costs by reducing impulsive shopping and eating.



How to consider your eating habits:

Think about the last meal or snack that you had. Can you describe:

- Were you hungry or thirsty?
- Why did you eat? Was it stomach hunger or another reason?
- Did you eat slowly or quickly?
- What did you eat?
- How much did you eat?
- Did you enjoy it? Why or why not?
- Were you distracted?

Being able to answer these questions means you were likely being mindful of your eating habits.

Tips to eat mindfully:

- Turn off distractions, especially screens like the TV or your phone.
- Pay attention to your hunger. Try to eat when you are hungry but still in control; stop when you feel satisfied and comfortable.
- Eat slowly and make it a point to enjoy every bite.
- Stop eating if you aren't enjoying the food.
- Eat with others. Focus on the conversation as well as the food.



Eat Food From the Land

Enjoyment of eating includes choosing foods that reflect your family's culture and traditions. This may be getting out on the land and hunting, berry picking, fishing or growing your own food.

Cultures and food traditions can influence:

- How you eat
- What you eat
- When you eat
- Where you get food
- How you prepare food

Including traditional foods in your diet can:

- Help you be healthier
- Grow your skills and knowledge around preparing food
- Create a sense of community and build connections
- Keep your cultural roots and food traditions alive by sharing them across generations and with others



For more information on nutrition,
email healthpromotion@gov.nt.ca

You can also visit the healthy
eating section of our website
by scanning the QR code



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