

A busy student's guide to healthy eating

Every year in March, dietitians promote and celebrate Nutrition Month. The theme this year is eating healthy by planning, shopping, cooking and enjoying meals. As a dietitian-in-training, I know the importance of being organized and having meals planned out. However, as a busy student, sometimes I find it challenging to practice what I preach. It is stressful to come home after a long day and then figure out what I can eat for dinner and whether it will be healthy and affordable on a tight student budget!

Planning ahead can make things a lot less stressful and it doesn't have to mean a lot of extra work. The Healthy Families BC website has a meal planning sheet that I use to plan out my meals and create my shopping list for the week. You can find it [here](#).

Once I have my list in hand, I go shopping, but I make sure I do not go grocery shopping hungry. I have a snack beforehand so I will not be tempted to stray from my list and buy foods that I do not need.

When I go shopping I try to buy most of my food from the perimeter of the store. This way I spend my time looking at the four food groups of Canada's Food Guide and fill my basket with fruits and vegetables, meat, dairy and alternatives and whole grains.

Sticking to my budget is important. To save money I use coupons and weekly sales flyers to plan meals and I visit the bulk section of the grocery store so I can explore and try small amounts of ingredients without buying entire packages that I may not use up. I also find it easier to stick to my budget if I use cash to pay for my groceries.

After shopping comes the cooking and preparation of my meals for the week. When I find I am eating the same few dishes over and over again, I look for new recipes to try. The Dietitians of Canada website has a link to simple, delicious [recipes](#). I make several portions I can freeze then reheat later in the week when I do not feel like cooking. Sometimes, I will invite friends over for a potluck. We each bring a dish to share and it is a great way to try new foods and save money.

Eating healthy can be challenging, but with a little meal planning and smart shopping, it does get easier. Enjoy eating and happy Nutrition Month!

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