

Nutrition for Life: Navigating the Grocery Store

Healthy eating requires a bit of planning ahead, but it is well worth the investment. The best place to start is by learning how to get around the grocery store. Create a shopping list and remember to have your coupons with you. And always compare prices! **Store brands are often cheaper than brand name items**, even with a coupon.



In the **produce** section:

- Choose produce that is in season for a better taste and price.
- Choose non-starchy vegetables, like greens, broccoli, cauliflower, and carrots.
- Pick up some baby carrots, cucumbers, cherry tomatoes, and salad mixes to save time.
- Buy fresh fruit to satisfy your sweet tooth.

In the **meat** department:

- Look for leaner cuts that have “round”, “loin”, or “sirloin”, in the name.
- If choosing ground meat, look for “lean” or “extra lean”, with no more than 15% fat.
- Buy skinless chicken pieces or remove the skin at home.
- Try to choose fatty fish like salmon at least twice a week for heart health.
- Avoid processed meats like sausage and bacon. If you do purchase deli meat, choose low sodium varieties.

Picking **frozen** foods:

- These are great to stock up on since you don’t have to worry about them going bad quickly.
- Choose ones without added sauces, salt, or sugar.
- Non-breaded frozen fish and chicken are great lean protein options.

Picking **canned** foods:

- Choose low-sodium canned vegetables and fruit packed in water or 100% juice with no added sugar.
- Good choices for canned protein include chicken, tuna, salmon, and sardines that are packed in water instead of oil and labeled low-sodium.
- Plant-based sources of canned protein are dried beans, peas, and lentils. They are inexpensive and full of fiber.

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In the **dairy** section:

- Protein options in this section include cheese, tofu, and eggs.
- Choose low or fat-free yogurt and milk to avoid excess fat and calories.
- Pick a butter blend that contains heart-healthy oils like olive or canola to avoid saturated fats.



In **dry goods**:

- These include bread, pasta, grains, tortillas, dried beans, peas, and lentils.
- Read nutrition labels and look for whole grain starches that are high in fiber and low in added sugars.
- Good choices include oats, whole wheat bread, corn tortillas, quinoa, whole wheat pasta, dried beans, and lentils.
- Instead of snack foods like cookies and crackers, opt for unsalted nuts and light popcorn.



Round out your shopping with seasonings and condiments. Choose a variety of dried spices without added salt, as well as vinegars, and heart-healthy oils like olive and canola to ensure that you're flavoring your dishes without adding sodium or saturated fat.

Once you get home, be mindful of how you put away your groceries. First, put away your frozen items, meats, seafood, and dairy. Then you can prep your fresh vegetables and fruit by rinsing, cutting, and putting them at the very front of your refrigerator as a reminder to eat them first. You can also put your high protein snacks like Greek yogurt and string cheese in front to make them an easy choice. Any dry snacks, like whole grain crackers or nuts, can also be portioned out and stored in tightly closed plastic bags to keep portions in check.

Happy shopping for healthy meals!

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