

Get Smart as You Shop

Fruits and vegetables can fit into any budget. The following tips can help you save money as you strive to eat more fruits and vegetables. Remember, fresh, frozen, canned, and dried types all count toward getting more fruits and veggies.

Before You Shop

Look for store ads and use them when planning your weekly grocery list. Plan to buy the fruits and vegetables that are on sale and use them in meals and snacks that week.

Plan your weekly meals and snacks before you go shopping. Look through your freezer and pantry to see what fruits and vegetables you have at home that you can use.

Think variety! Make a point to try a new fruit or vegetable each week.

While You Shop

Purchase fresh fruits and vegetables in season when they tend to be less expensive.

Buy whole fruits and vegetables instead of pre-cut or pre-packaged forms which tend to be more expensive.

Consider frozen and canned if fresh are too expensive. Frozen and canned fruits and vegetables keep longer than fresh.

Shop smartly! Look out for added sugar in canned fruits; look for fruit packed in water or juice. Choose veggies with low sodium.

Consider generic or store brands instead of name brands. Store brands tend to cost less and have similar taste and nutrition.

If your budget allows, **buy larger bags of frozen fruits and vegetables**. They may be a better bargain and you can use what you need and keep the rest for later use.

Buy canned or dried beans and use them in recipes instead of meat which is more expensive. Traditional recipes made with meat such as chili, soups, and Mexican dishes like burritos are delicious with beans.

After You Shop

Use fresh fruits and vegetables within a few days after shopping and use frozen and canned fruits and vegetables later in the week.

As you are putting your groceries away, **chop some fruits and vegetables** and place in bags or storage containers. Keep them in the refrigerator so they will be ready to grab for lunches and snacks!

Best Seasons for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

- Many of the listed fruits and vegetables are available year round, but their cost will be higher and quality may be less.

Apples: January-May, September-December

Choose firm apples with no soft spots.

Avocado: Year-round

Ripe fruit will be slightly firm, but yield to gentle pressure.

Banana: Year-round

Select bananas that are firm; with no bruises.

Bell Pepper: Year-round

Choose peppers with firm skin, with no wrinkles.

Broccoli: January-May, September-December

Select bunches that are dark green.

Cantaloupe: May-September

Select melons that are slightly golden with a light fragrant smell.

Carrots: Year-round

Pick carrots that are deep orange in color. Avoid carrots that are cracked or wilted.

Corn: May-September

Husks should be green, tight, and fresh looking. The ear should have tightly packed rows of plump kernels.

Cucumber: May-September

Choose firm cucumbers with rich green color and no soft spots.

Eggplant: July-October

Pick symmetrical eggplant; avoid oversized eggplants with may be tough and bitter.

Grapes: June-December

Look for firm, plump, well-colored clusters.

Lettuce: Year-round

Choose fresh, crisp leaves with no wilting.

Mushrooms: January-April, November-December

Mushrooms should be firm, moisture-free (not dry), and blemish-free.

Onion: Year-round

Onions should feel dry and solid with no soft spots or sprouts.

Orange: January-June, November-December

Pick oranges that are firm, heavy for their size and have bright colorful skins.

Peach: June-September

Choose peaches that are soft to the touch with a fragrant smell.

Pear: January-May, August-December

Ripe pears will yield slightly to gently pressure a the stem end.

Strawberries: April-July

Strawberries should be dry, firm and well shaped and be a bright shade of red.

Summer Squash: June-August

Look for squash that are firm with bright, glossy exteriors.

Sweet Potato: September-December

Choose firm, dark, smooth sweet potatoes.

Tomato: May-August

Select plump tomatoes with smooth skins, free from bruises or cracks.



Sources: Information can be found at www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov and University of Tennessee Extension (2002). A Guide To Buying Fruits & Vegetables at www.utextension.utk.edu/publications/spfiles/SP527.pdf.