

HO 8.2 Supermarket Shopping Strategies

With so many choices at supermarkets today, it's hard to know how to go about selecting foods that are enjoyable, nutritious, and affordable. In addition, our busy schedules don't allow us to spend hours in a supermarket comparing costs and nutritional content among the various food products. To help you out, here's a list of 10 supermarket shopping solutions to help you select economical, nutritious foods easily and quickly.

- Shop with a grocery list to prevent impulse buying and forgotten items. Buy only what is on this list unless a food item is on sale and can be substituted for another food on your list OR a food that you buy regularly is on sale.
- Shop on a full stomach to avoid unplanned purchases or selecting convenience foods that may have a low nutrient density. Leave the decisions to your head, not your stomach!
- Choose a supermarket that offers a variety of foods at a variety of prices. Larger supermarkets will usually have lower prices than smaller stores do because the larger stores can buy their stock in large quantities.
- Check weekly supermarket ads to see what items are on sale. Make a note of these on your grocery list. If you don't get the ads sent to you in the mail, make a request at the customer service counter at your supermarket.
- If you live in the United States or Canada, clip coupons from the ads in the newspaper or use a coupon app on your smart phone. If you clip coupons, keep them in an envelope or container in a kitchen drawer or cabinet until you are ready to use them.
- Pay attention to the unit price of a food product (it is usually listed on the grocery shelf in small print near the product's price). If the unit price of a food is lower when purchased in a large quantity, buy it only if you will eat all the food before it spoils.
- Try store-brand or generic products. There is often little or no difference in quality and nutritional content between these and expensive brand-name foods. However, it's still wise to compare nutrition information.
- Decide which convenience foods you really need. While prepackaged, prewashed, and presliced foods are more expensive, the reduced preparation time may or may not be worth the extra money.
- Spend most of your time in the produce, meat, dairy, and bakery sections. But don't stop there! You'll find lots of nutritious foods like beans, whole grains, and cereal in the other aisles.
- Healthy eating does not have to mean paying more for your groceries. Making healthy changes might mean shifts in food choices, such as choosing no-sugar-added yogurt instead of processed fruit snacks. Or you might need to change a method of preparation, such as baking chicken instead of frying it.