

## **Smart Shopping for Healthy Eating**

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March is Nutrition Month. The goal of this year's campaign is to provide consumers with practical advice on how to plan, shop and cook. Healthy eating begins with what you put in your grocery basket. However, with so many choices available- how do you know what to buy or what is healthy? Read on to learn more about how to shop smart!

### **At the grocery store- the outer aisles**

At the grocery store, stock up on foods with lots of nutrients without added sugar, sodium and fat. The outer aisles of the store tend to have the freshest, least processed foods. In the produce section, choose colourful vegetables and fruits; if you have these in your home, you are more likely to eat them. In the cooler section, look for lower-fat milk products, such as skim, 1% or 2% milk and low-fat yogurt. In the meat section, choose lean, unseasoned meats and poultry instead of deli slices. When buying seafood look for fish rich in omega-3 fatty acids, such as salmon and trout, as well as shellfish, such as shrimp and crab. When buying bread and cereal, choose products made with whole grains use the nutrition facts panel and choose products with more fibre.

### **At the grocery store- the inner aisles**

When shopping in the inner aisles steer clear of packaged foods that are low in nutrients and high in salt and sugar such as salty snack foods, sugary drinks and baked goods. Stock up on nutrient-rich staples when on sale, including canned items such as: no-salt-added canned tomatoes, beans and lentils, canned vegetables (hint: rinse these to reduce salt intake), whole grain pasta and rice, high-fibre cereals, nuts and canned fish. Beware of packaged foods that are marketed or branded as being natural, organic or a healthy choice- this is a marketing trick to make you believe a product is healthier than it actually is.

### **Healthy Convenience**

Eating at home doesn't mean never using convenience foods. In fact, there are many healthy convenience food choices that can be time savers when it comes to getting healthy meals on the table. Next time you're shopping, look for these nutritious options:

- Pre-cut or frozen vegetables and fruit: Look for vegetables and fruit that have no added sugar, salt or fat (hint: avoid added seasonings and sauces). Along with peas and corn, try frozen leafy greens such as spinach, kale or mixed Asian vegetables. Frozen peaches, mangos and berries

make can make quick smoothies or a fast dessert. Here are some other items to have in your freezer.

- Crushed tomatoes, sliced mushrooms and pre-cut veggies. Combine these for a fast pasta sauce.
- Pre-made salads. Top your salad with almonds or tuna to make an easy meal in a pinch!
- Frozen fish: Buy plain, unbreaded frozen fish fillets such as salmon, trout or haddock. Having these on hand in your freezer at home makes it easy to enjoy fish at least twice a week.

### **Buying Local**

Healthy foods don't just come from the grocery store- there are a lot of opportunities to buy local food in your community. When you buy directly from local growers, you are buying food at its freshest and tastiest! The local economy also gets a boost when you buy locally produced food, because dollars, jobs and agriculture are kept in the community. Farmers' markets are where local farmers and vendors sell locally grown produce, preserves and crafts. These two websites tell you where to find farmers' markets and growers in the Tri-county area:

[www.localflavours.org](http://www.localflavours.org) and [www.lanarklocalflavour.ca](http://www.lanarklocalflavour.ca).

For more information on how to navigate your food choices, reading food labels and for other resources, visit the health unit website at [www.healthunit.org/nutrition](http://www.healthunit.org/nutrition) or call the Leeds, Grenville, and Lanark District Health Unit's toll-free Health Action line at 1-800-660-5853 (613-345-5685)