

Smart food shopping

Overview

Shopping for healthy foods that fit into a meal plan can be difficult. It is like trying to get through a maze without a map. Here are some tips to help you get on the right path. First, always shop at the same store. Then, make a shopping list. The list should follow the store's layout. Then plan your trip to the supermarket. Knowing how to shop for the right foods can improve your diabetes.



OBJECTIVE: To become a smart supermarket shopper.

How can you stay on track?

One of the hardest things to do while shopping is to find foods that taste good and are good for you. To help you choose the best foods for your meal plan, make a list before you go to the store. This will make shopping easy. Make sure you have the items you need. Avoid tempting purchases that are usually not healthy foods. Plan so that food shopping is an easy part of making your meal plan work.

- Plan to go food shopping on a regular schedule.
- Do not shop on an empty stomach. Shopping when hungry may tempt you to buy extra items that are not on your list.
- Try to do your food shopping in the same store. This way you will learn your way around and spend less time looking for items.

Important things to remember

You will be looking for foods that are low in calories, fat, cholesterol and sodium. Also, look for high fiber foods. Choose foods based on the amount of carbohydrates (carbs) it has. All of this can be frustrating and time consuming. The following tips may help:

- Learn how to read a food label. A dietitian can help you with this.
- Plan to do most of your food shopping around the outside aisles of the store. These foods tend to be the healthiest.
- Add fresh fruits and vegetables to your list. These make good snacks. If you do not have time to peel and chop fresh fruits/vegetables, consider buying them directly from the salad bar.
- Buy low fat dairy products (fat-free milk, low fat or non-fat yogurt and reduced fat cheeses).
- Whole grain breads and cereals are a good source of fiber. They also are low in fat and cholesterol.
- Processed foods such as canned soups, "heat and serve" items and convenience meals are higher in sodium. Try to make these types of foods at home.
- Canned vegetables can also be high in sodium. Opt for fresh or frozen vegetables. They are naturally low in sodium.
- Canned fruits do not contain added sodium. It is a good idea to choose canned fruits that are in water or natural fruit juice instead of in syrup. These will be lower in carbs.

QUIZ

- A good rule of thumb for choosing low fat foods is to choose a food that has less than 3 grams of fat for every 100 calories in the portion.
- Cholesterol is only found in foods that come from animals (eggs, meat, poultry, milk and cheese). It is best to keep your intake of cholesterol to 300 mg per day or less.
- Remember that 15 grams of carb is equal to one slice of bread or one medium piece of fruit.
- Buy the same brands once you are sure they fit into your meal plan. This can save a lot of time reading labels. Consider buying pre-portioned items (for example, 3 oz. cans of tuna and 4 oz. cans of fruit). Although these may cost a bit more, you will be sure you are getting the right amount for your meal plan.
- “Dietetic” or “diabetic” foods are often more costly. These foods can also contain carbs. Always read the nutrition label.
- Check with the manager of your supermarket. Many supermarkets offer tours on “How to Shop for Healthy Foods.”

How can your doctor help you?

If you need help with your meal plan, ask your doctor to refer you to a dietitian or diabetes educator. Also, your doctor will let you know of any special dietary needs that you have, such as, low fat/low cholesterol to control your blood cholesterol level or a low sodium diet to help control blood pressure.

QUESTIONS

1. Which shopping tips can help you stay on track?
 - a) Shop on an empty stomach
 - b) Make a list before you go to the store
 - c) Shop on an irregular schedule
 - d) Shop at a different store each time
2. Canned soups, “heat and serve” items and convenience meals contain high amounts of _____.
3. True or False: Foods labeled “dietetic” or “diabetic” are always “free foods” that do not contain any carbs.

ANSWERS

1. b
2. sodium
3. False