



SHOPPING AT THE GROCERY

by Sarah Muntel, RD

WHERE DO I BEGIN?



Shopping for groceries can be a daunting task. Many people feel overwhelmed the minute they pull up to the store. For some, the goal is to get in and grab food as quickly as they can, sacrificing nutrition along the way, throwing processed convenience foods and sweetened beverages in their cart. Change your thinking! The food you purchase at the store can be your first step to health. Filling your cart with the right foods can provide your body with the nutrition it needs to get through the week.

Start with a Plan

Every great shopping trip begins with a plan before you walk in the door. It is very difficult to have a successful trip without knowing what you need. Scan your cabinets and cupboards and make a list. Decide what necessities you may need, as well as items for your latest recipe. You can build on your list all week so you won't forget. Add a dry erase board to your kitchen or keep an open shopping list on your smart phone, and add items you need as you remember so you won't find yourself making multiple shopping trips each week.

It's also a good idea to get your family involved as well. Post a list on the refrigerator where family members can add to it. If your daughter has an idea of what she wants for an after school snack, add it to the list. If your partner has a new recipe he or she wants to try, list the ingredients.

Find the Deals

Certainly, you don't have to be an "extreme couponer" to get a good deal, but before you decide where to go, take a look at the latest sale ads. Some shoppers have time to go to multiple stores. They may pick up chicken on sale at one store and fresh vegetables on sale at another. If you have time for this, great! If not, pick the one with the best sale for you. You may even want to consider planning your meals around the sales to save extra money. For example, if chicken breasts are on sale, plan to have chicken enchiladas, chicken salad and chicken stew, or pick up some extra chicken to throw in your freezer. Coupons can be a great way to save money. Collect coupons of your favorite items and keep them handy. There are also some great Web sites that help you match what's on sale with the coupons you may have. Check out www.couponmom.com or www.thekrazycouponlady.com for great coupon tips and bargain shopping.

On your mark, get set, go!

- Wear comfortable shoes while at the store.
- Don't grocery shop while hungry.
- Avoid grocery shopping during peak times, like Saturday or Sunday afternoons.

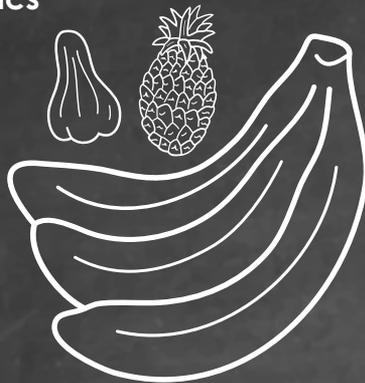


While you are shopping...

There are so many things to remember as you walk into the store. Here are a few things to keep in mind:

Remember the basics

Fill your cart with the essentials. A common recommendation is to shop the perimeter of the store. By doing this, you see mostly your basic foods such as fruits, vegetables, dairy and meat. These products are the core of any diet.



Stick to your list

When you bring your prepared list, you will be less likely to be tempted by sale items and junk foods.

Beware of fortified foods

Many foods have added nutrients and are marketed as "healthy." For example, sugar laden cereals that have added fiber or sweetened drinks that are fortified with vitamins and minerals. These products seem

healthy, but are they? Think about a healthy food like an apple or a carrot. Does it need a label telling you its nutritional benefits?

Bulk can be an option

Some stores carry bulk items. Flour, oatmeal, and other grains can be bought cheaply this way. Typically, you can get as much or as little as you would like. This can be a great way to try new things. If you've never tried whole wheat flour, now is your chance! Get a half a scoop and see what you think.



Read the ingredients

The ingredient panel can tell you everything you need to know. Look at the bottom of the label to find the ingredient panel. The ingredient listed first is the ingredient there is the most of in the food item. Avoid products which have a long list of ingredients or ingredients you can't pronounce.

Plan for emergency meals

Always have emergency meals on hand at home. These are for those times you need a quick Plan B meal. Have extra canned beans, frozen vegetables and whole grain pasta on hand just in case.

Easy meal options

Sometimes life can get hectic. There are several items you can get at the store that can be quick and easy meal options. Some of these options may be a little more expensive, but can be a lifesaver on busy nights. Items like rotisserie chicken and pre-chopped and washed fruits and vegetables can be a great choice for busy nights.



Shop for food staples when they are on sale

There are certain things your family always needs. If you see your favorite brand of black beans or whole grain cereal on sale, grab some extra because you know you'll use it later on.

Shopping continued on next page

As You Tour Each Aisle: Key Choices

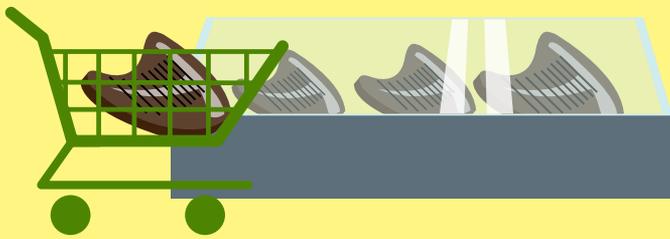
Produce

You can't go wrong here. Fresh fruits and veggies should make up at least half of your plate, so you need a lot of these. Opt for choosing your staple food items, as well as things you may not typically purchase, so you're trying new things. For example, spaghetti squash is a great substitute for pasta, and romaine lettuce can make a good sandwich wrap. Sometimes it pays to purchase chopped produce. Yes, it costs a little more, but if you are more likely to eat it, then go for it! Beware the high calorie dips and dressings and reach for a lower calorie option.



Meats

Meats are a great source of protein. The goal is to choose a low fat meat, and that can be tricky. In this food group, the biggest obstacle is the fat content. Opt for skinless meats, but if you do purchase items with skin, trim it before you cook it. Look for very lean beef, lean hamburger, sirloin steaks and pork loin as they are all great choices.



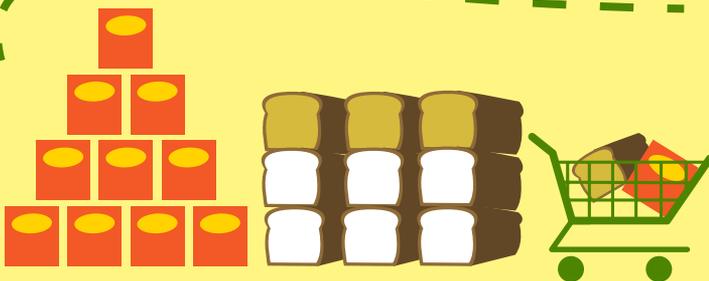
Dairy

Foods in the dairy section can provide protein and they are a great supply of calcium. Be sure you reach for one percent milk, low fat cheese and light yogurt. You'll get the same protein and calcium without the fat.



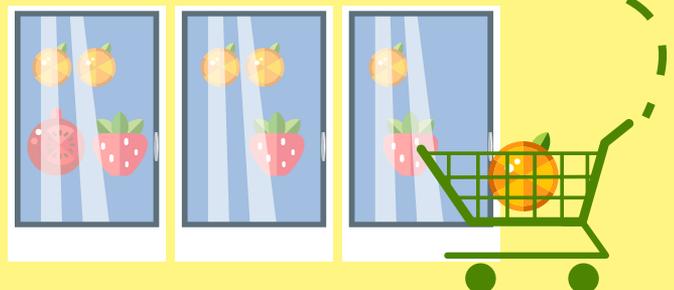
Cereals and Breads

Whole grains provide your body with the fiber and carbohydrates it needs. Reach for whole grain cereals and oatmeal without added sugar. They can be a great choice to get you going in the morning. Pass over the white bread and choose a whole grain option.



Frozen Foods

Frozen foods need not be overlooked. You can find frozen vegetables and fruit that can be used anytime. Frozen chicken, beef and turkey meat balls are great to keep on hand. When you get to the ice cream section, remember to practice moderation!





There are Alternatives

Some people are avoiding the grocery altogether. A new trend is online grocery stores. These stores allow you to shop in the comfort of your own home and have the food delivered to your door. For many, this is a great way to stay on track with what they need to purchase, avoid choosing things not on their plan and save time.

At the End of the Day

At the end of the day, work on changing your focus to health. Begin viewing the grocery store as another chance

for you to move to a healthy lifestyle by choosing foods that will positively affect your body. Remember the old saying, “you are what you eat.” That’s the truth, and this is the first step to get there.

About the Author:

Sarah Muntel, RD, is a Bariatric Coordinator at Community Bariatric Surgeons in Indianapolis, IN. She has 15 years of experience working with bariatric patients and loves to work with people as they change their lives and improve their health. Her favorite part of her job is her weekly Support Group. In her free time, Sarah enjoys spending time with her husband and three children.

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