

Eating well on \$10 a day



Food costs are spiralling along with the cost of other household items. Dietitian **Alison Pask** shares some tips on how to keep your shopping bills down and still eat healthily.

I know a lot of people living with diabetes who manage to eat well on limited budgets. These people are resourceful and skilled in making money stretch to feed large families when times are tough.

I interviewed a number of families for this article and all their stories shared common themes – the importance of planning, smart shopping and thinking creatively.

They agreed that, while hard, it is possible to budget \$10 per person per day for food – the kind of fresh, home-cooked food they need to help control their diabetes.

This is backed up by the University of Otago food cost survey 2010, which shows an average adult man can achieve a well-balanced diet by spending \$62 per week for a basic diet or \$83 per week for a moderate diet.

Planning is the key to ensuring all meals are well balanced. Plan your week's meals in advance and stick to this. Make a shopping list based on this plan. Stick to your shopping list and avoid impulse buys.

Go through recipes before you shop to make a list of extra ingredients you need. Where possible substitute ingredients for things you already have in your cupboard. On busy nights when you know time is going to be limited plan for a quick easy meal.

Smart shopping is critical to ensuring you stick to spending the money available. Use supermarket leaflets to find out about specials for the week. Buying items on discount can help you save dollars. But don't be tricked into buying items you don't need just because they are discounted.

Keep a selection of basic ingredients like pasta and rice in the cupboard. When these are on special, stock up as far as your budget allows. Canned fruit or canned tomatoes on special are around \$1 per can and these can be used to create a quick meal.

Topping up with small amounts of grocery items during the week can break the budget. Pick a time to shop and stick to it, and never shop when you're hungry.

Bulk buying isn't necessarily cheaper so check the costs of smaller packets, especially if they are on special. Bulk buying can result in overeating and that will play havoc with blood glucose levels. Often the supermarket's cheaper 'home brand' is exactly the same as the more expensive labelled brands.

For the computer-savvy shopper, buying online takes away the temptation to pop something extra in the



trolley and lets you see the running total. Once you reach your budget, you can delete or exchange for cheaper varieties. It's embarrassing to have to leave items behind at the checkout because you can't afford them, but deleting online is easy.

Shop at your local market. Vegetables purchased in season will be the best buy so plan to use whatever is in season. For example, when cauliflower is plentiful make the most of it. You can serve it in a stir-fry, as a cauliflower cheese, and also in soups and salads. Variety needs to occur over a year not all in one week.

Plan to top up the end-of-week meals with frozen or canned vegetables, instead of fresh. That way you won't be throwing out items that didn't last. Save items like canned fish for the end of the week as these won't deteriorate the same way fresh items will.

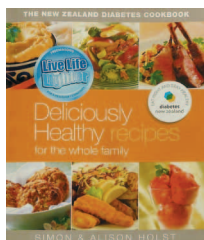
Be creative with meals and leftovers. Adding an extra herb to leftovers can change the meal into something different the following night. Try adding a mashed potato top to a casserole, add a can of beans to mince and serve on noodles with extra vegetables, turn leftover rice into fried rice. If you have a freezer, use it to your advantage.

Saving money on the weekly grocery shop

- Replace costly butter with a vegetable spray. Rice bran and canola oil are heart healthy and cheaper than olive oil.
- Drink tap water, it's healthy and free. Give up the alcohol and save money and calories.
- Grow your own herbs, they are expensive to buy over winter yet easy to grow in a small space.
- Eat salads in winter using seasonal veg. Make a winter coleslaw using cabbage, add a finely chopped onion, a grated carrot and mix with low fat yoghurt instead of mayonnaise.
- Eggs make a quick economical meal and can be the basis for a meal once or twice a week. Think poached eggs and spinach on toast for a quick lunch or vegetable quiche with salad for dinner.
- Potatoes are extremely versatile and can be turned into the cheapest most delicious baked potato, simply add your favorite toppings for an instant meal.
- Make good use of canned fish, it is great value and big on flavour too.
- Fresh fruit makes the best snack, choose fruit in season. If you have space, plant a few fruit trees to ensure you have fresh fruit in years to come.
- Plan to base your meals around a hearty vegetable and lentil soup a couple of times a week. Eat with a wholemeal roll or piece of toast.

Make the most of beans and lentils, these are cheap and easy to use and a small amount goes a long way. Lentils cost a quarter of the price of meat and can be added to meatballs, meatloaf and any moist mince dish, such as Bolognese or casserole.

Follow the Diabetes New Zealand healthy plate and make your plate half seasonal vegetables, quarter carbohydrate and only one-quarter meat. Meat, chicken or fish is the most expensive item on your plate. ●



For more ideas try *Deliciously Healthy Recipes* by Simon and Alison Holst. Written in conjunction with Diabetes New Zealand, it is available from Diabetes Supplies Limited for \$20.50.

Do you have any questions for our dietitian?

Email them to editor@diabetes.org.nz or write to the Editor, *diabetes* magazine, PO Box 12-441, Thorndon, Wellington 6144.



Winter cottage pie

This is an economical all-in-one meal that costs less than \$3 per serve. The cottage pie contains meat, vegetables and carbohydrate all in one dish. This combination is a great way to introduce your family and friends to lentils. Lentils are a cheap source of protein, low in fat and high in fibre. One serve of this dish provides a quarter of your recommended daily fibre intake. For a vegetarian meal, replace the mince with an extra cup of lentils.

Ingredients

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 300 grams low fat mince | 2 carrots |
| 1 cup dried brown lentils | ¼ cup tomato puree |
| 4 medium sized potatoes | 1 tbsp Worcester sauce |
| ½ cup low fat milk | 1 tsp Vegemite |
| Freshly ground pepper | 1 tsp mixed herbs |
| 1 tbsp rice bran or canola oil | 1 tsp mustard powder |
| 1 medium onion | 1 tbsp soy sauce |
| 2 sticks celery | 2 cups frozen mixed veg |
| 2 cloves garlic | ½ cup grated Edam cheese |

Place lentils in a pot and cover with cold water, bring to the boil. Simmer until tender (approx 25 minutes). Or you can use canned lentils straight from the can. Set aside once cooked.

Peel potatoes, chop and boil in a pot full of water until cooked (approx 20 minutes). Mash with milk, add freshly ground pepper to taste and place aside.

Finely chop onions and garlic. Processed garlic purchased in a jar can be used as an alternative to fresh garlic cloves.

In a non-stick fry pan, heat oil and sauté onions and garlic until transparent in colour. Add mince to onions and cook until brown.

Cut celery and carrots into 1cm cubes. Add tomato puree, Worcester sauce, Vegemite, herbs, celery and carrots to mince and simmer for approx 10 minutes. Add cooked lentils, frozen mixed vegetables and soy sauce, mix.

Transfer to a casserole dish. Spread mashed potato over the mince and lentil mixture and top with grated cheese. Bake at 180°C for 30 minutes.

Garnish with a colourful seasonal item, such as red capsicum or freshly chopped green herbs.

Serves 4.

APPROX NUTRITION PER SERVE

KJ: 2270, Cals: 540, Protein: 44g, Fat 17g, Carbohydrate: 52g, Fibre: 11g.

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