

Stacy Beeson, RD, LD
St Luke's Health Solutions Registered Dietitian

MARCH 9TH, 2009: EATING RIGHT WHEN THE BUDGET IS TIGHT

Eating right doesn't have to mean steering clear of fresh produce and stocking up on Hamburger Helper. If you are on a tight budget, you'll be glad to know that shopping for healthy foods is doable. Much of the extra costs associated with food come from low-nutrient, packaged food options.

BEST BUDGET BETS:

- **GRAINS:** Stock up on bulk dry goods such as old-fashioned oatmeal and brown rice. Hot cereal is usually less expensive than cold cereal, especially sugary, cold cereal. Look high and low on the grocery store shelves to find the generic brands of food items.
- **FRUITS & VEGS:** Start your shopping trip in the fresh produce aisle where you can always find deals on everything from red leaf lettuce to bananas for <\$1.00/lb. If you buy canned vegetables, the whole versions are usually cheaper than cut-up and always rinse them before you eat them.
- **DAIRY:** Buy the largest size skim or 1% milk and yogurt in bulk.
- **MEAT:** Meat is probably the most expensive food item. Stretch meat by adding beans to tacos or meatloaf. Try textured vegetable protein (dry soy) sold in bulk and add it to any meat dish. It is a dry product that soaks up any liquid.

BOOST THE BOXED:

If you do opt for inexpensive, boxed dinners, add at least one item to them. For instance with boxed mac and cheese, the cheesy sauce helps items combine nicely. Here are ideas:

- Macaroni with beans and salsa
- Macaroni with spinach
- Macaroni with broccoli

BOXED TO BONA FIDE:

Homemade versions of boxed items are usually just 20 minutes away. Try this swap for Hamburger Helper's Beef Stroganoff.

TURK STROGANOFF

½ package whole wheat egg noodles, dry

2 t olive oil

3 cloves garlic, minced

½ onion

6 mushrooms

ground pepper, paprika, pinch red pepper flakes, salt sprinkled as you cook

1 lb ground turkey (99% fat-free ground breast or ground turkey with 8 g fat/serving)

1 can *Healthy Request* Cream of Mushroom soup

½ cup light sour cream

Cook noodles, minus the salt. Sauté the garlic, onion and mushrooms in olive oil. Sprinkle in the pepper, paprika and little salt. Add the ground turkey after 7 minutes or when mushrooms appear the slightest bit soft. Sprinkle in the spices again. When turkey is brown, turn heat down and add soup and sour cream slowly (if heat is too high, sour cream may clot). Sprinkle in ground pepper and paprika again. Add cooked noodles and serve. Serves 6.

Turk Stroganoff: 1 cup prepared:

Cost: \$.98 Nutrient pay-off: 302 calories, 10 g fat, 3 g saturated fat, 290 mg sodium, 5 g fiber

Hamburger Helper: 1 cup prepared:

Cost: \$.77 Nutrient cost: 320 calories, 15 g fat, 6 g saturated fat, 850 mg sodium, 0 g fiber

Contact St Luke's Health Solutions Dietitian Stacy Beeson at 381-2403.