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ForLife Nutrition- A nondiet approach to healthy eating.

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Stretching Your Grocery Budget

Today's economy is forcing everyone to rethink their budgets. With grocery costs continuing to rise while incomes do not, it is time to look for ways to get more food for less money. Smarter shopping can not only lead to smaller bills at the checkout, it is an opportunity to make food choices that can lead to a healthier lifestyle.

The most expensive items on the shopping list for most people tend to be meats. To make the servings go further, try foods that used bite size pieces of beef, pork, chicken or fish rather than a large portion for each person like a pork chop or steak. For instance you could make soups, stews and stirfries. Making a ground meat sauce to put over pasta will stretch further than serving each person several meatballs.

Buying a whole chicken or turkey is cheaper than buying cut up poultry parts. You can cook the whole bird and freeze some of the cooked meat for a potpie, BBQ sandwiches or a salad for a later meal. When serving chicken breasts you can make the portion seemed bigger by pounding the breast flat. This will also tenderized the meat and help it to cook up more quickly.

You can try to skip the meat completely at least one day of the week. Peanut butter, eggs, dried beans and dairy products all offer protein. Dried beans including kidney beans, black beans, garbanzo beans, baked beans, black-eyed peas, navy beans and lentils all have protein along with a high fiber content. By cutting back on meat servings you will be eating more heart healthy.

Another large part of the grocery budget can be spent on fresh fruits and vegetables. Fresh produce is very nutritious but can also be too expensive for people to afford. If you live near a farmers market you can get a lot more produce for a lot less money than you would spend at the supermarket. This stimulates the local economy and you will be a lot healthier when you include more produce in your diet.

Finally, a great way to get nutritious foods without spending a lot of money is to plant a garden. If you live in an apartment you can plant in pots like you do house plants.