



Fruits and vegetables *on a budget*



According to a 2007 article in *DOC News*, a publication of the American Diabetic Association, increasing your intake of fruits and vegetables lowers your risk of stroke. Eating 3 to 5 cups a day has long been recommended by the USDA's My Pyramid Program to reduce the risks of heart disease, high blood pressure and development of type 2 diabetes. The health benefits are well documented, and so you may not need to be sold on why you should eat more produce. But the reality is, getting a variety of fruits and vegetables into your diet can sometimes be expensive. However, there are ways to add more produce into your diet without breaking the bank:



Work the sales

Most grocery stores feature weekly sale items. Study the sale flyers, and only buy what is on sale that week. Shopping this way automatically gives you variety in your fruits and veggies, as what's on sale tends to change each week. Keep an eye on seasonal produce. For example, apples and pears are ripe and on sale in the fall, and clementines tend to be cheaper during the Christmas season.



Buy the farm

If you are lucky enough to live near a farmer's market, produce is very often fresher than in stores and more reasonably priced. Shopping at the end of market day can potentially yield some added savings because some vendors would rather sell their wares at a discounted price than take them back home again.

Some farms offer a program called Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). People can become "members" of a local farm by paying a yearly fee up front and then receive boxes of produce every week during the growing season.



Opt for frozen options

Adding frozen vegetables to soups, stews, casseroles and pasta dishes is a good way to increase your intake. Vegetables such as frozen spinach can be added to many recipes to give you more heart health benefits. Onions and cabbage are vegetables, too, and they're usually reasonably priced. If you like them, add them to everything.