AMERICAN COLLEGE OF
Lifestyle Medicine

Supermarket Smarts: Shopping for Staples on a Budget



Grocery stores are actually designed like a giant puzzle to make you spend more money. They use bright lights, specific music, and clever shelf spots to nudge you into buying things you may not need. If you go in with a game plan, you can ignore those tricks and get exactly what you need without breaking the bank.



1 Use the Store Map to Your Advantage

Most stores are laid out to lead you toward expensive, processed snacks. You can re-wire your shopping trip by changing your path.

- **Start in Produce:** Head to the fruits and veggies first. Filling the bottom of your cart with greens, apples, and potatoes makes you feel like you have plenty of food right away.
- **Ignore the End-Caps:** Those big displays at the end of the aisles are meant to grab your attention. If it's not on your list, don't let it jump into your cart!
- **Avoid the Checkout Junk:** The candy and magazines at the register are there for emotional decisions. Just keep your eyes on the exit.

2 Find the Hidden Deals

The most expensive items are usually placed right at your eye level. To save money, you have to look around.

- The best deals on beans, rice, and oats are usually on the very top or very bottom shelves.
- Most generic or store-brand versions of frozen veggies and oats are exactly the same as the fancy name brands, just way cheaper.
- If you're worried about fresh veggies going bad, buy frozen! They are picked at their best, they're already chopped, and they won't rot in your fridge.

3 Don't Get Fooled by Fancy Words

Marketing can be tricky. Here is how to see the real price:

- **Check the Unit Price:** Ignore the big price tag. Look at the tiny print that says "price per ounce." That's the only way to know if the big bag of rice is actually a better deal than the small one.
- **Ignore Buzzwords:** Words like "superfood" or "artisanal" are usually just there to make an item cost three times more. A plain bag of frozen spinach is often healthier than a snack labeled as a "superfood."

DO 1-2 OF THESE NOW

- ☐ Start your shopping trip in the produce section.
- ☐ Stick to your list; steer clear of displays at the end of the aisles.
- ☐ Write your list in the order of how you walk through the store. This stops you from wandering around (which is when you start grabbing extra snacks).
- ☐ Make a habit of checking the bottom shelf first for canned goods and grains.



nudge to nourish

Developed through a collaborative effort by the American College of Lifestyle Medicine (ACLM) and Nudge to Nourish, in partnership with Greener by Default.