

Budget Foods

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It can be difficult and expensive to try to eat healthy with diabetes. Things are gradually changing, but some of the healthiest foods are still often among the most expensive. Here are ten foods that won't sabotage your budget or your blood sugar.

- 1. Eggs.** Eggs are a great, low carb source of protein and an array of other nutrients. Yes, the yolk does contain some saturated fat, but with eggs, the good outweighs the bad, and they are one of the most inexpensive and versatile protein sources. Try them scrambled, fried, in a veggie and cheese omelet, or hard-boiled on their own or made into egg salad.
- 2. Canned or Dried Beans.** Beans top the list of inexpensive healthy foods in my book. You can usually purchase a can of beans, such as black, kidney, pinto, or navy beans for around one dollar per can. One-half cup of beans provides around 15 grams of carbs, varying amounts of protein, and lots of fiber. Add beans to salads, soups, tacos, dips or chili.
- 3. Canned Tuna.** Canned tuna is another inexpensive lean protein source, packed full of omega-3 fatty acids, which have a positive effect on heart health. Buy tuna packed in water and add it to a green salad for lunch or mix with a little plain yogurt, light mayonnaise, celery, and onions for a quick and healthy tuna salad.
- 4. Sweet Potato.** Sweet potatoes do contain carbohydrates, but they are packed full of good nutrition -- providing vitamin A, potassium, and fiber -- just make sure to watch your portion size and count your carbs. A small sweet potato contains about 18g of carbs and 3g of fiber. You can throw a sweet potato in the microwave and have a great side dish in a flash.
- 5. Frozen Veggies.** Frozen veggies such as green beans, broccoli, cauliflower, Brussel sprouts and spinach are low in carbohydrates and considered "free foods." They provide a variety of vitamins, minerals, and fiber and are lower in sodium than canned vegetables. Frozen veggies should be a part of your weekly grocery list. They can complete a meal in just a few minutes.
- 6. Seasonal Vegetables.** Figure out which vegetables are in season, and focus on creating meals with those veggies. This will save you money, not to mention the fact that seasonal veggies taste better and are packed full of nutrients. Summertime seasonal veggies include zucchini, tomatoes, and leafy greens -- all low carb, low calorie, and delicious -- experiment with new ways to cook or grill your veggies (see recipe at the end for Grilled Tomatoes).

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7. Seasonal Fruit. The same story goes for seasonal fruit as seasonal veggies. Take advantage of the upcoming summer months and all the fresh fruit available from berries to melon. Most fruit contains about 15 grams of carbohydrates per 1 cup (cubed) or about 15 grams of carbs per one small fruit.

8. Peanut Butter. Peanut butter is high in calories and fat, but it is the unsaturated fat that is good for heart health. Peanut butter is inexpensive, low in carbs, and can really help fill you up. If you are looking to lose weight, go easy on portion size as the calories can add up quickly. Try spreading peanut butter on a slice of whole-wheat bread or English muffin for breakfast or on whole-wheat crackers, apples, or celery for a snack.

9. Plain Yogurt. Plain yogurt in a large tub is less expensive than the individual containers. Don't just think of yogurt for breakfast -- it can make a great snack with some toasted almonds and sugar-free jelly mixed in, it can be added to tuna, chicken, or pasta salads to add creaminess or it can be part of a fruit smoothie dessert.

10. Oatmeal. Most everyone knows that oatmeal is a healthy breakfast choice, but oatmeal can be used in a variety of ways. It can be added to dishes such as meatloaf or burgers or in most other recipes that call for bread crumbs. Oatmeal is not low carb, but it's higher in fiber than breadcrumbs and quite inexpensive as well. You can also substitute one-half cup oatmeal for the same amount of white flour in most baking recipes.

RECIPE

Try this low carb, low-cost side dish:

Grilled Tomatoes 4 medium tomatoes, sliced into 1/2-inch thick slices 1 tablespoon olive oil 1/2 teaspoon salt 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper

1. Prepare an indoor or outdoor grill. Brush each side of each tomato slice lightly with olive oil. 2. Sprinkle salt, pepper and cayenne pepper on one side of each slice. 3. Grill tomatoes over medium heat for 2 minutes on each side.

Serving Size: 1 tomato Makes 4 servings Nutrition information (per serving): 62 calories, 4g total fat, 0g saturated fat, 304mg sodium, 7g total carbohydrate, 2g dietary fiber, 0mg cholesterol, 1g protein

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