

HEALTHY SHOPPING

Rebecca Snow, MS, CNS, LDN

Natural Care Center at the Maryland University of Integrative Health

410.888.9048 x6614

Grocery shopping can be a lot of fun. Bringing a list could help you cut back on impulse buying. There are so many grocery stores to choose from, including health food stores, farmer's markets. Buying local can improve the quality of the food you are purchasing and be better for the environment. See www.localharvest.org for local farmer's markets and Community Supported Agriculture(CSA's are farms that you can buy into and share in their seasonal harvest).

SHOPPING TIPS

- **Buy Whole Food:** Shop around the perimeter of the grocery store. Even health food stores carry processed foods with chemicals added. Consider buying most of your food whole, like fruits, vegetables, mushrooms, nuts/seeds, grains, beans, meats, eggs, fish etc. Ask yourself, "Would my grandmother recognize this food?" Fresh food is best. Frozen is better than canned, with fewer preservatives and added ingredients.
- **Read labels:** When you read the label, can recognize the ingredients? If you don't know what it is, do you want it going into your body? Avoid deceptive labeling like "natural," insect legs are natural. Always check for expiration or production dates on labels.
- **Buy Organic?** Although more expensive, organic foods are more nutritious than non-organic foods and are better for the environment. You can prioritize to minimize cost, focus on avoiding nonorganic produce from the Dirty Dozen list <http://www.ewg.org/foodnews/> and get organic meats, dairy and eggs whenever possible.
- **Produce:** Shop for a variety of color and types of plants.
- **Meat & Eggs:** As much as possible, buy free-range, hormone and antibiotic-free meats and poultry. Check out www.eatwellguide.org for local farms and restaurants that carry these types of products. Grass-fed is always best, because the quality of fat will be better for your health. Ensure that you purchase eggs that are organic or free-range, antibiotic and hormone-free.
- **Dairy:** Many people cannot consume dairy without ill effects. The enzymes needed to digest milk, a very complex food, decrease as we age. Again, best to buy organic whenever possible.
- **Seafood:** Fish should smell a bit like the sea but fresh – it *should not* smell bad. Buy smaller varieties of cold water, non-farm-raised fish or seafood. Larger fish species are generally far more contaminated than smaller species. Safest wild fish with high omega 3 content include flounder, salmon, halibut, cod, trout, sardines, light tuna, and anchovies. For more information go to www.ewg.org and www.oceansalive.org.
- **Bulk commodities:** Health food stores often carry bulk grains, beans, nuts and spices. This is one way to shop smarter and save money.

MINIMIZE:

- **Processed meats:** luncheon meats, salami, hot dogs, bacon. If you do get these, choose nitrate-free sources. Also, avoid meat products with MSG or hydrolyzed protein.
- **Frozen poultry:** Most frozen poultry is packaged by poultry processors who use hormones to maximize bird size and growth rate and antibiotics to prevent disease because of the extreme cage-crowding found in a typical poultry "farm." Purchase hormone-free frozen poultry.
- **Sugars:** Avoid added sugar in food. Remember that ingredients are listed in the order of the quantity. Words to look for: Corn syrup or sweetener, maltodextrin, dextrin, dextrose, fructose, sucrose, maltose, glucose, high-fructose corn syrup, lactose, malt syrup, rice syrup, fruit juice concentrate, dehydrated cane juice.
- **Hydrogenated fats:** They aren't healthy and should be strictly avoided. Look for the words "partially hydrogenated," "vegetable shortening," or "trans fatty acids" on the ingredient list. These fats are chemically altered and wreak havoc in the body.
- **Artificial sweeteners:** These include aspartame, saccharin, sucralose, neotame, dihydrochalcones, and acesulfame potassium. Although touted by many diet plans, these chemicals can disrupt insulin levels, hunger signals. Many people who consume diet sodas regularly, lose 5 pounds after eliminating artificial sweeteners from their diet.