

Vegetables

Eating vegetables provides many health benefits, including reduced risk of chronic diseases. Because each vegetable has unique nutrients, choose a variety for meals and snacks—including dark green and orange vegetables and legumes. MyPlate and the Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend 1½ to 2½ cups of vegetables daily for elementary-age children. Teens and adults need 2½ to 3 cups. In general, 1 cup of raw or cooked vegetables or vegetable juice, or 2 cups of raw leafy greens can be considered as 1 cup from the Vegetable Group.

SPEND SMART: COMPARE FRESH, FROZEN, AND CANNED

Fresh

- Buy fresh vegetables in season, spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu/video/shop-seasonal-fruits-vegetables. They cost less and are likely to be at their peak flavor. When not in season, frozen or canned versions are often a smarter buy. For example, buy fresh sweet corn in the summer but frozen or canned corn during other seasons.
- Wash vegetables before preparing or eating them. Under clean, running water, rub vegetables briskly with your hands to remove dirt and surface microorganisms. Dry with paper towels after washing.
- Consider price and personal philosophy when deciding whether to buy organic vegetables. They tend to cost more and research* has not proven them to be nutritionally superior.

Frozen

- Commercially frozen products are frozen within hours of picking and tend to retain more flavor. They also have less sodium than canned.
- Buy plain frozen vegetables instead of those with special sauces or seasonings. Sauces or seasonings can add calories, fat, and sodium as well as cost.
- Compare prices and convenience when choosing package size. Bags offer the advantage of using just what you need.

Canned

- Consider store brands; they are usually lower priced and often packed by the same manufacturers as name brands.
- Choose the product most appropriate for intended use. For example, buy the least expensive chopped tomato for a soup or stew.
- Drain and rinse canned vegetables to reduce the sodium.

*Dangour, A. et al. 2009. Nutritional Quality and Organic Foods: A Systematic Review. *Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 90 (3): 680-685.



For more ideas, tips, and recipes go to: spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu

SPEND SMART. EAT SMART.®

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CHECK YOUR \$-SAVING SKILLS:

1. Which of the following is the smart buy?
 - a. 1-pound bag of baby carrots @\$1.29
 - b. 2-pound bag of baby carrots @\$2.99
 - c. 2-pound bag of large carrots @\$1.68
2. Which of these is the smart buy?
 - a. 5-pound bag of russet potatoes @\$2.49
 - b. 32-ounce package of frozen French fries (9 servings) @\$2.49
 - c. 16-ounce store brand mashed potatoes (2½-cup servings) @\$1.99
3. Which of these is the smart buy?
 - a. 10-ounce bag of chopped lettuce @\$2.99
 - b. 16-ounce bag of coleslaw mix @\$1.59
 - c. 10-ounce bag of mixed specialty greens @\$2.99
4. What is the smart buy here?
 - a. Homemade green bean casserole (\$3.69 for 6½ cups)
 - b. Green bean casserole from the deli (\$2.40 for 2 cups)

(Answers on next page)

All prices in this publication were collected in central Iowa, Fall 2017. Although prices vary depending on date and location, the comparative differences generally follow a similar pattern.

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PLAN

SHOP

COOK

SPEND SMART: CONVENIENCE COSTS MONEY

Salads

Pre-packaged lettuce and spinach are usually more expensive than buying bunch greens to wash at home. They also tend to spoil quickly after opening. Try other green salads, such as chopped cabbage, broccoli slaw, peas, or green beans, mixed with low fat dressing.

Carrots

Pre-packaged baby carrots usually cost at least twice as much as regular carrots. Trade time for dollars by peeling, washing, and cutting your own. Refrigerate in airtight containers or bags; sprinkle with water if they start to look dry.

Potatoes

A 5-pound bag has 12 to 15 potatoes—enough for 3 meals for a family of 4. If desired, add shredded or sliced cheese before serving. A similarly priced package of convenience potatoes typically has only 4 servings.

SPEND SMART: PROTECT YOUR INVESTMENT

- Store vegetables and fruits in separate crispers in the refrigerator to protect them from bruising and to help control moisture.
- Practice smart vegetable storage.

| STORE IN REFRIGERATOR IN PLASTIC BAG | STORE IN COOL, DRY PLACE |
|---|---|
| About 1 week: Beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, peppers | Onions, potatoes, pumpkin, winter squash (acorn, butternut) |
| About 3 to 5 days: Asparagus, green beans, lettuce, spinach, cucumbers, summer squash, sweet corn | Tomatoes keep their flavor longer when stored stem-side down at room temperature. |

- Monitor vegetable condition and use before they are past their prime. Add to soup or stir fry, roast, or steam and serve at the next meal—or cool quickly and freeze in an airtight container for a future meal.
- Create a ready-for-soup container. Label a freezer-weight bag and add chopped broccoli stems, cauliflower cores, leftover onions, green peppers, mushrooms, or cooked vegetables as available. Add them to canned, frozen, or homemade soup.

Start a vegetable garden or plant a few vegetables in containers, *store.extension.iastate.edu/Product/PM870B*. Growing your own vegetables is great exercise, saves money, and provides fresh, nutritious produce from the garden.



Photo courtesy of Linda Naeve

Answers:

CHECK YOUR \$-SAVING SKILLS

1. C—The 2-pound bag of large carrots is \$.84 per pound.
2. A—A 16-ounce box of store brand mashed potatoes is \$.08 per ½ cup serving. However, a 5-pound bag (\$.09 per serving) is more versatile (mashed, baked, roasted potatoes).
3. B—Coleslaw mix is \$.10 per ounce.
4. A—Homemade costs half as much—plus you can use the low-sodium soup.

EAT HEALTHY AND STICK TO YOUR BUDGET!

The Spend Smart. Eat Smart. app can help you at home and at the grocery store to

- Choose and prepare fresh fruit and vegetables
- Find recipes and meal ideas
- Compare products to find the best price

Download for free from your app store.



EXPLORE THESE RESOURCES FOR MORE IDEAS

Iowa State University Extension and Outreach

- **Spend Smart. Eat Smart.**—spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu
- **AnswerLine**—www.extension.iastate.edu/answerline (or, call 1-800-262-3804)
- **Nutrition and Wellness**—www.extension.iastate.edu/humansciences/nutrition
- **Extension Store**—store.extension.iastate.edu

Choose MyPlate—www.choosemyplate.gov



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