

CENTER FOR FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

Stretch Food Dollars with Tips from University of Minnesota Extension

St. Paul, Minnesota — By dropping some common high-cost habits and trying a few cost-cutting strategies, families can make their food dollars go further, says a health and nutrition leader with University of Minnesota Extension.

“Many families look at food as a fixed cost that they can’t change. However, with a little time and planning, families can eat healthy and save money at the same time,” said Trina Adler Barno, Program Leader for Extension’s health and nutrition programs.

University of Minnesota Extension is cooperating with ISU Extension and Outreach and SDSU Extension to provide resources for families struggling with the human challenges brought on by avian influenza. Extension staff from the three land-grant universities are providing families with information on everything from food safety education and stretching food dollars as the cost of eggs and poultry increases to implementing strategies to manage a family’s finances and stress during tough times. To learn more, follow #AvianFluImpact on social media and visit <http://z.umn.edu/afimpact>.

DROP HIGH-COST HABITS

Many families develop high-cost food habits, Adler Barno said, but working to change those habits helps to stretch a family’s food dollars.

“For example, if you’re in the habit of eating fast food or other restaurant food, you can save money by eating at home more often,” Adler Barno said. “In addition, when you’re shopping for food, rather than buying name brands, consider the store brand.”

Other high-cost habits to avoid include buying food that is already cut up or prepared in some way, and wasting leftovers or letting food spoil before it can be eaten.

TRY COST-CUTTING STRATEGIES

Adler Barno offers four strategies to help families get more value for their food dollars.

1. Plan meals and snacks one week at a time. First, plan to use what you have to ensure no food goes to waste. Plan larger size meals so you can work leftovers into meals later in the week. This saves time and reduces waste.
2. Use your meal plan to make a grocery list and stick to the list.
3. Be a careful shopper. Only shop in the aisles that have the groceries you need, based on your list. Avoid the aisles that contain items you don’t need. To avoid impulse buys, don’t shop when you’re hungry. Remember that stocking up on foods that are on sale only saves money if the food doesn’t go to waste.

4. Move foods that go bad quickly to the front of the fridge where you can see them and plan to eat them first. Cut up veggies and fruits so they are ready to eat.

CHECK HELPFUL RESOURCES

- [Live Healthy Live Well](#), an online resource from Extension Family Development, has tools and tips for how to cook, eat and shop wisely.
- [Spend Smart. Eat Smart.](#), a resource from Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, includes [recipes](#), [planning tools](#) and [how-to videos](#) to help families get the most nutritional value for their food dollars.
- Extension Answer Line has information and resources for consumers with home and family questions. In Minnesota, call 1-800-854-1678 toll-free Monday through Friday, 9 a.m.–noon and 1–4 p.m.
- The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Minnesota Food Assistance Program help Minnesotans who meet eligibility requirements purchase food for a better diet. Learn more and apply at the [Minnesota Department of Human Services food and nutrition website](#).

