

Shopping on a Budget – Providing Healthy Meals

Who: Adults and parents of infants age 6 -12 months and children 1 – 5 years of age

Why: Help families get the most nutritional bang for their bucks spent on food

Time: 20 minutes

Objectives: By the end of this session, participants will have:

- Reviewed tips for smart shopping – The 3 P’s
- Reviewed how to utilize unit prices at the grocery store
- Practiced how and when to use coupons

Lesson

Overview:

1. Introduction
2. Concept: Shopping smart - the 3 P’s
3. Concept: Understanding Unit Prices
4. Concept: A-B-C’s of Couponing
5. Closing

Materials: Posters:

“Look for Unit Prices”
“When Using Coupons”

Handouts:

“Eating on a Budget – The 3 P’s” - USDA
“Look for Unit Prices – Worksheet”
“When Using Coupons – Worksheet”
“Understanding the Price Tag” - USDA

Introduction

- Arrange chairs in a semi-circle before participants enter classroom (when able)
- Distribute Handouts: “Key to Choosing Healthful Foods – Using Labels” (Eng/Span)
“Read the Label on Snacks” (Optional Activity) (Eng/Span)
- Welcome Participants
- Give overview of class session
- Introductions (make sure to include children in the introductions activity)

Example: Introduce yourself. *“Hi my name is _____ and today we will be talking about smart shopping and how to get the most for your food dollars; in other words, how to save money when you shop for food. This class will be especially helpful for those of you who do the grocery shopping for your family. For those of you who don’t, please share what you learn today with your family’s grocery shopper.”*

Concept: Smart Shopping – 3 P’s

- **Lead Questions:**
 - *"How many of you plan your meals and take a list with you when you go shopping? What do you find helpful about making a shopping list?"*
- **Refer to Handout: Eating on a Budget – The 3 P’s**
 - **Key Points:**
 - **The three P’s are PLAN – PURCHASE - PREPARE**
 - **Plan:** Having a plan before going to the store is key to saving money and staying on budget.
 - ✓ Plan your meals and snacks for the week
 - ✓ Include meals that will stretch your dollar (soups, casseroles, slow-cooker or stock pot dishes)
 - ✓ Make a grocery list
 - Check what you already have; list what you need
 - ✓ Check for sales, look for coupons
 - Attach coupons to list; ready for checkout
 - ✓ Utilize store loyalty/savings programs
 - **Purchase:**
 - ✓ Don’t shop hungry or when too rushed
 - ✓ Stick to list; resist impulse (or child pestering) buys
 - ✓ Buy Store Brands if cheaper (often are)
 - ✓ Buy in bulk when you can, usually cost less
 - Repackage/portion when you get home
 - ✓ Choose fresh fruits or vegetables in season – frozen or canned when not
 - ✓ Save by doing your own prep!
 - Pre-cut fruits and vegetables, individual cups of yogurt, instant rice and hot cereal are convenient, but usually cost more than those that require a bit more prep time.
 - ✓ Compare Unit Prices listed on shelves to get the best price.
 - **Prepare**
 - ✓ Some meals items can be prepared (prepped) in advance; prep ingredients and pre-cook on days when you have time.
 - ✓ Double or triple up on recipes and freeze meal-sized containers of soups and casseroles or divide into individual portions.
 - This will cut down on eating out, have healthy meals ready on days you cannot cook.
 - Leftovers also make good lunches for next day.
 - ✓ Try a few meatless meals.
 - ✓ Get creative with fruits and vegetables; great for snacks



FACTS ABOUT 3 P’s:

When you plan your meals and shopping, you eat healthier, save money and stay on budget. Knowing how to navigate grocery store and shopping prepared cuts down on time and money spent in grocery store. Taking a little extra time to make it yourself will provide your family with healthier, better tasting food and can be a fun for kids.

Concept: Understanding Unit Prices

- **Lead Questions:**
 - *"Who has seen unit prices on the shelves where you shop? What do you find helpful about unit prices?"*
- **Listen and affirm participant's answers**
- Most stores place a unit price label on the shelf. The unit price will usually tell you the price of the item per ounce. Buying in bulk or in big quantities is sometimes a better buy, but not always. Unit pricing can help you decide whether the larger sized item is the better buy. You also want to remember that the larger item is only a better deal if you are actually able to use it.
- **Display - Look for Unit Price Poster**
 - *"Let's take a look at this poster. You also can look at your worksheet to see this information."*
- **Key Points:**
 - Most stores have unit prices on their shelves. You can use this information to figure out what is your store's best buy
 - *"Look at your worksheet and circle the food items that are the better buys. For example, you will compare the 32 ounce yogurt with the 6 ounce yogurt."*
 - PAUSE.....
 - **Question:** *"What did you learn?"*
- **Listen and affirm participant's answers**
 - **Answer:** The larger yogurt has a better (cheaper) unit price per ounce than individual 6 oz serving size container. Even though the 6oz. size is more convenient, if you just bought the larger 32oz container, you could portion out yogurt into Tupperware or washed 6oz containers to put into lunches.
 - **Answer:** The block cheese (like what you get from WIC) is also cheaper option per ounce. The convenience of the shredded cheese will cost you \$1.19 more.
- **Refer Unit Price Worksheet (pg. 2)**
 - Sometimes there isn't a Unit Price provided. Does anyone have any thoughts on how to figure out unit prices on their own?
 - **WORKSHEET EXAMPLE: Same Brand, Different Sizes**
 - The lowest priced food is not always the best buy. Figure out the unit price for these two sizes of canned tomatoes to see which is the better buy.
 - ✓ Large Can = $\$1.49 \div 28 \text{ ounces} = .053 = 5.3\text{¢}$ per ounce (best buy)
 - ✓ Small Can = $\$0.99 \div 14.5 \text{ ounces} = .068 = 6.8\text{¢}$ per ounce
 - **WORKSHEET EXAMPLE: Different Brands, Different Sizes**
 - Name brands are often more expensive than off-label or store brands; but not always. Figure out the unit price for these two packages of macaroni to see which is the better buy.
 - ✓ Off-Label = $\$1.69 \div 12 \text{ ounces} = .140 = 14\text{¢}$ per ounce
 - ✓ Name Brand = $\$2.75 \div 24 \text{ ounces} = .114 = 11\text{¢}$ per ounce (best buy)
 - *"What questions do you have?"*



FACTS ABOUT UNIT PRICES

When trying to determine the most cost effective item to purchase, unit prices can let you know which item is the most cost effective purchase. Convenience packaging and ready to serve foods/drinks will almost always cost you more. Usually name brands will cost more than store brands, but not always.

Concept: A-B-C's of Couponing

- **Display – When Using Coupons Poster**
- **Lead Question:**
 - *"How many of you use coupons when grocery shopping?"*
- **Key Points:**
 - Coupons can really help save money if you use them for things you normally buy. Using a coupon is not a bargain if you don't use the item or don't really need the item.
 - Can lead to impulse buying for the sake of "the bargain".
 - Don't forget to use your savings card if you shop at a store that offers such a card.
 - Remember to take advantage of deals such as "buy one get one free" when you are redeeming your WIC benefits.
- **Refer to When Using Coupons Worksheet (pg. 1)**
 - *"Coupons are another way to help stretch your dollar. How do you know if you will really save money by using a coupon? Let's look at a couple of examples on the poster and on your worksheet"*
 - Circle the 'best buy' for each of the foods on your worksheet.
 - ✓ Crunchy O's: $\$4.59 - \$1.00 = \$3.59$
 - ✓ Toastee O's: $\$3.09$ (best buy)
 - ✓ Fancy Hawaiian Pineapple: $\$1.39 - \$0.50 = \$0.89$ (best buy)
 - ✓ Golden Hill Pineapple: $\$0.99$
 - *"What surprised you?"*
 - Possible responses might be:
 - A brand name product with a coupon is the better buy.
 - Sometimes a store brand is cheaper than another product with a coupon.
 - You cannot assume a product with a coupon is going to be your "best buy".



FACTS ABOUT USING COUPONS

Coupons and store rewards cards can be a way to help stretch your dollars. Coupons can also lead to un-needed impulse buys if you don't stick to your list. Sometimes a brand name with a coupon is the better buy and sometimes the store brand is still cheaper.

Closing

- **Thank participants for their participation**