

10 Tips For Healthier Grocery Shopping, From The Nutrition Experts Who Know Best

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The grocery store can be a tricky place.

Between the trendy buzzwords on packaging, the tempting low prices on processed food and the limited amount of time you'd like to spend reading nutrition labels, even the most knowledgeable shoppers can end up making mistakes in his or her cart.

But with a few tried and true tricks up your sleeve, we firmly believe it's not all that tough to make smarter decisions at the store. That's why **we asked a group of nutrition experts to share their top tips for making healthy grocery shopping a success.** Here are their suggestions -- add yours in the comments!

1. Make A List

"Know your grocery store and go with a list of healthy foods in the order they are laid out. That will help you resist temptation, and it speeds up shopping because you're not wasting time cruising the aisles for what you need."

--Elizabeth Ward, MS, RD, author of MyPlate for Moms, How to Feed Yourself & Your Family Better

2. Don't Go Hungry

"Healthy eating choices start with the groceries you have on hand. Grocery shop with a plan and shopping list. Do not attempt to grocery shop when you are hungry, as you will be surprised at the significant number of impulse buys in your cart."

--Vandana Sheth, RDN, CDE, spokesperson for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

3. Pick (Even) More Produce

"In my experience, most people tend to under-shop the produce department. They toss a head of lettuce, a stalk of broccoli and a bag of carrots into the cart and move on. But remember: We're supposed to be eating five servings of veggies a day. As a rule, vegetables should take up at least a third -- or even half -- of the real estate on your plate. Logically, this means that veggies (fresh or frozen) should take up at least a third of your grocery cart!"

--Monica Reinagel, MS, LDN, CNS, author of Nutrition Diva's Grocery Store Survival Guide

4. Stock Up On Canned Foods

"Many shoppers overlook the canned foods aisle because they don't realize that canned fruits and vegetables can be just as nutritious as fresh and frozen. Plus, canned foods are always available. I stock my pantry with canned veggies, fruits, legumes and broths so I can make a healthy meal in minutes. A recent study found that meals prepared at home [contain], on average, 200 fewer calories than meals from restaurants -- and they're lower in fat and sodium. Having a well stocked pantry can equal pounds lost and pennies gained!"

--Katherine Brooking, MS, RD, co-founder of Appetite for Health

5. Go Plain

"The original versions (most often plain-flavored) foods and beverages -- like cereals, soy milk, yogurt, pasta sauces and more, are usually the most nutritious. That's because as brands extend product lines, they move into more decadent offerings that cost more and have worse nutritional profiles."

--Julie Upton, MS, RD, co-founder of Appetite for Health

6. Be Selective When Buying Organic

"My best tip, and the one I use for myself always, is to buy produce according to the Dirty Dozen and Clean 15 lists. Buying all organic isn't realistic for most [people] ... but you can easily and affordably minimize pesticide exposure when you buy according to the lists."

--Marjorie Nolan Cohn, MS, RD, CDN, ACSM-HFS, a spokesperson for the Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics and the author of Belly Fat Fix

7. Read The Label

"Bypass the front of the package and rely mainly on the nutrition facts panel and ingredients lists. If you're looking to bump up fiber or protein intake, or lower fat/saturated fat intake, the nutrition facts panel can be a one-stop shop for all nutrients and can simplify the process of comparing products. However, when using them, make sure to check the serving size to make sure it's a reasonable portion for you. If not, you'll have to double or triple the numbers that you're trying to add or reduce."

--Elisa Zied, MS, RDN, CDN, author of Younger Next Week

8. Try Something New

"Trying something new? Use the bulk food aisle to scoop up a small portion of buckwheat or bulgur or millet or dried beans."

--Angela Ginn-Meadow, RD, LDN, CDE

9. Don't Buy At Eye-Level

"Look high and low on store shelves for the least expensive items in their category -- and often the most nutritious. Brands pay higher slotting fees to be placed at eye level, and those costs are generally passed on to consumers."

--Upton

10. Do A Final Check

"Before you pull into the checkout line, pull over and do a final cart check. Make sure your cart has visually 50 percent fruits and veggies, 25 percent lean and plant proteins, 25 percent whole grains -- and don't forget to double check there are enough healthy fats, like avocado, nuts, seeds, nut butters and liquid oil ... You are only as healthy as your last trip to the grocery store!"

--Dawn Jackson Blatner, RDN, CSSD, LDN, author of The Flexitarian Diet

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