



A guide to GROCERY SHOPPING for your family

IF YOU'RE RESPONSIBLE FOR SHOPPING FOR YOUR FAMILY GROCERIES, IT CAN FEEL OVERWHELMING AS YOU HAVE TO BALANCE THEIR NUTRITIONAL NEEDS, THEIR LIKES AND WANTS, AS WELL AS YOUR BUDGET. REGISTERED DIETICIAN **JULIE PERKS** SHARES SOME HELPFUL ADVICE.





Choosing foods to include in your family diet is a special task dedicated to family caregivers. It is a responsibility and sometimes a difficult task, but one that can result in lifelong habits and ultimate health outcomes, so learning how to do it well is an important task.

“Don't let your children dictate the menu, rather coach them through what healthy foods look like.”

Below are some tips to use when deciding on what to purchase:

Choose most of your foods from the outside aisles and sections of a store.

This is often where the whole foods are (i.e. not processed). These foods are dairy products, vegetables and fruits, as well as eggs and meats (avoid the processed varieties such as sausages, viennas, polony, etc. as they are high in saturated fats and salt

(sodium)). Low GI breads are often in these sections as well. You may consider a low GI white bread if your child refuses or dislikes low GI brown or whole-wheat.

When purchasing meats, always choose leaner cuts.

Something to look out for in on meat products is water or brine listed in the ingredients list. Paying for salted water injected into your meat will make the price per kilogram cheaper but essentially you are not paying for meat.

Choosing meats that are 100% meat will ensure no massive shrinkage in cooking and that you get what you pay for. Meats that have been brined are not suitable for people with hypertension or high blood pressure. Also, eating these at a young age will predispose children to chronic diseases later on in life. Creating better habits around food choices at a young age is critical for healthier choices when they are in charge of their own grocery shopping and food choices.

Some foods in the middle aisles are good staples.

These include pulses and legumes (e.g., dried or tinned split peas,

lentils, chickpeas, and beans). Certain wholegrain cereals such as oats or oat brans as well as rice and whole-wheat pasta and popcorn are also good options.

Other foods are unsalted, raw nuts or nut butters for a healthy snack option (unless someone in the family is allergic, of course). When choosing more convenient frozen or canned foods, look out for added salts and sugars. However, these foods are great convenient options and nice to keep in the pantry for quick meals.

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Foods to avoid or limit include processed snack foods, sugary cold drinks, sweets and chocolates.

These foods do not provide nutrition to a child or family member's body. However, they can form part of a diet when enjoyed in moderation as they teach children they can be enjoyed on occasions, but not daily. Many of these foods are not suitable for children's teeth either. These



foods should also not be used as motivation to finish other foods or as a bribe – please see a registered dietician in your area if your child is a fussy eater.

When choosing more convenient frozen or canned foods, look out for added salts and sugars.

Learn to read food labels.

This puts the power in your hands as you are able to identify for yourself what a food contains in the ingredients list as well as the nutritional profile of the food product.

Ingredient lists are always written in descending order from highest to lowest quantity of the ingredient. Additionally, if a food is labelled as containing something in the title of the product, a percentage of exactly how much of that ingredient is then listed in the ingredient list.

On the actual nutrition information table, some things to consider when comparing one product to the next would be to compare the 100g vs 100g (also depicted in millilitres where applicable).

You may also then look at the serving size of the product to observe what you or your child/children will be consuming if they have the suggested portion size.

Where possible, avoid taking the children with you.

They often cause additional impulse buys, which are often unhealthy choices. As a parent you know best and it can be difficult to dissuade them when you are not alone.

Always have a list ready.

Having some ideas of what you plan to prepare during the week will make grocery shopping easier.

Always remember to buy vegetables and fruits seasonally.

Foods are more affordable and have a higher nutrient density as they have not lost a lot of their nutrients during travel and storage. Often foods that are priced differently during certain times of the year will tell you when it is seasonal and higher prices will indicate that you are purchasing out of season.

Meats that have been brined are not suitable for people with hypertension or high blood pressure.

Finally – always remember, as a parent or caregiver of a child – the most important thing is the well-being and health (including future health) for your child. So, you often know best what you should be purchasing and making.

Don't let your children dictate the menu, rather coach them through what healthy foods look like and at age-appropriate times allow them to decide on dinner options and get them helping in the kitchen. This fosters a healthy relationship with food and gets them on board with healthy eating and reduces their risk of chronic diseases of lifestyle.

I often say, "Be the change you wish to see in your family's health," so why not start making a few changes today to ensure the improvement of your family's future health. ♥

NUTRITIONAL GOALS:

- **SUGAR:**
Ideally less than 5g/100g
- **TOTAL FAT:**
less than 3g/100g is considered low fat. However, sometimes the good fats found in nuts and seeds that can be in certain food products are really beneficial for the body so if the fat is high, but it is either from a monounsaturated source or a polyunsaturated source AND the saturated fat content is low, it may still be a suitable product for your family.
- **FIBRE:**
Adults need 25-30g fibre per day. Children should aim for their age PLUS 5g per day. Ideally foods should have more than 5g/100g to be considered high in fibre. Most vegetables and fruits (especially unpeeled) are high in fibre and are not labelled but when choosing wholegrain starches, this is something to consider.

