



Eat Your Greens with Dr. Black | plant-based nutrition for the whole family

Parent speaking: “We try to plan meals out, um, and figure out what we're going to eat. (It doesn't always happen.) Um, so then we can go to the store and already have things bought and purchased, um, and try to make everything. Like we have our protein, and then have like a veggie to go with it. Um, and then some days it's just fly by the seat of our pants, but we still try to stop at the store and get things, but still have that protein and veggie. Um, and then we just do our best to kind of plan ahead and make it work. But sometimes it's just getting it done.”

Welcome to eat your greens with Dr. Black, Small Byte edition. This podcast is all about supporting families in their efforts to give their children a solid foundation of healthy eating habits that will last a lifetime. I'm your host, Dr. Angela Black. I'm a board-certified pediatrician with over 20 years of experience. I'm passionate about using evidence-based guidelines to teach my patients and their parents how to prevent chronic diseases for a lifetime of health.

In today's episode of Eat Your Greens, we're just taking a Small Byte. Small Byte episodes give you the opportunity to get advice direct from a pediatrician in 10 minutes or less. I'll serve up a snack sized answer to some of the most common questions I get asked in the office.

Don't forget that this podcast offers general health information about nutrition and feeding of infants and children. It's meant for educational purposes only and is not intended to replace the important relationship between a parent, child, and pediatrician. If you have concerns about your child's nutrition, health, or growth, please consult your doctor. For more episodes, or if you would like more information about child nutrition and feeding, please visit www.eatgreenswithdrblack.com.

Unless you just never set foot in a grocery store, you've probably noticed that food costs, like many other things, are on the rise. Parents often tell me that one of the reasons that they have a hard time feeding their kids the healthy foods that they know they need is due to the expense. It's just cheaper to go through the drive through or the drive thru... or so it seems. Contrary to popular belief, plant-based meals don't have to drain your wallet. In this Small Byte episode, we're going to talk about how to ditch that expensive junk food in favor of affordable plant-based meals that will suit every budget.

Welcome to Episode 8 of Eat Your Greens with Dr. Black. Here's a surprising piece of news. According to a recent publication, a low-fat vegan diet may be as



Eat Your Greens with Dr. Black | plant-based nutrition for the whole family

much as 16 percent less expensive than a conventional Western style diet. For the average household, that adds up to over \$500 off of the yearly grocery bill.

We all know that processed foods are bad for us. They have lots of added fat and sugar and salt, lots of preservatives. But it's a little surprising to hear that they may actually be more expensive in the long run. Today we're going to talk about how we can create affordable, healthy, plant predominant meals that are both nutritious and budget friendly.

Of course, it bears saying that if you are on a tight budget, it is imperative to avoid eating out whenever possible. Nothing's going to make your waistline grow or your wallet shrink faster than a meal at a restaurant.

Let's start with planning our grocery trips. Go into your kitchen, look in your pantry, look in your freezer and your refrigerator, and see what you already have. I recommend making up a menu for the week based on what you have already spent money on. How many of us find that we have 10 cans of things that have been hidden in the back of our pantry with three-year-old expiration dates? It's definitely happened to me, and that's just money down the drain. So, start by knowing what you have and build your weekly menu around that.

Another trick when you're planning that menu is to choose recipes that use similar ingredients. That's going to maximize their potential and minimize waste. For example, if you buy a bag of potatoes, you can bake them all at once, have some baked potatoes with one meal, and then you have potatoes to mash for another meal.

It goes without saying that you should make a list and stick to it. Try to avoid impulse purchases whenever you can. The way I do this is to use my local grocery store's online ordering app and then I do curbside pickup. So, I'm never standing in that checkout line seeing all the things that I really don't need.

Most major grocery store chains offer this service for free now. Sometimes there's a little fee, especially if you're, say, doing a same day order. I like to plan ahead put my order in a few days in advance, and that way I have time to add things that I didn't realize I needed. And that usually, at least for our grocery chain, cuts out that same day fee. On the occasion when I do end up having to pay, I think it's like five dollars, um, I know that it's worth it because I would definitely have spent more money on impulse purchases if I had walked into the grocery store.



Eat Your Greens with Dr. Black | plant-based nutrition for the whole family

So, grocery shopping to review: Know what you already have, make your menu in advance for the week, choose recipes that have similar ingredients, and try to avoid impulse buys. Simple as that.

So, when you are planning your meals, you'll notice that one of the most expensive items tends to be the protein containing foods. We're talking about things like beef and fish, eggs - even the cost of eggs is up quite a bit. Now on the one hand, protein's definitely an essential component of any balanced diet.

Although I think many health experts would argue that here in the United States, at least, we are way too focused on protein. Nevertheless, you're going to want to include some healthy protein sources, and one way to save money is to choose the plant-based protein sources over the animal-based ones because they're definitely much cheaper.

Things like beans and lentils, tofu, tempeh, and then whole grains like quinoa and brown rice, barley. Things like that have plenty of protein in them. When choosing those protein sources, the dried beans and lentils definitely can be less expensive than the canned varieties. And if you have a membership to someplace like Sam's or Costco, you can buy them in bulk and that also saves money in the long run because you can store them for quite a long time.

When I was writing this episode, I went on my local HEB grocery store app and I compared some prices, and here's what I found. For lean ground beef, the price ranged from... the low end was \$5 to as much as \$9 a pound. Chicken also averaged about \$5 a pound, and salmon ranged from \$17 to \$20 a pound. Compare that to a one-pound bag of dried pinto beans, which was only \$1.20.

The next most expensive food category generally is fresh produce. And I know the produce section can be a little bit overwhelming. There are tons of options, which is great, but the prices can fluctuate widely based on what season it is, where you live, even environmental factors like droughts and climate change.

So, you have to have a little bit of know how to figure out how to make the produce section more budget friendly. To begin with, it's pretty standard recommendation that you're going to want to look for fruits and vegetables that are in season. Because, of course, they are going to be more affordable and also fresher. A good idea is to buy staple vegetables in bulk when they're on sale and then freeze them for later use. I tend to keep things like jalapenos or other spicy peppers, bell peppers, and pre chopped onions in my freezer. That way, first of all, they're not going to go bad if I don't use them right away, and then, when I do have



Eat Your Greens with Dr. Black | plant-based nutrition for the whole family

a recipe that calls for them, I have quick access to them. Also, herbs like basil, parsley, and cilantro freeze well. Uh, you can rub them with a little bit of olive oil or a similar healthy oil - don't use too much because you don't want to end up adding a ton of oil into your recipe - and then you can freeze them in an ice cube tray and then just pop it into whatever you're making when you need it.

Now, I remember when my kids were growing up, I would buy tons of fruit and then 80 percent of it would go bad on the counter because nobody would touch it. So, if you notice that your fruit is getting a little bit ripe and you don't think it's going to get eaten, go ahead and throw it in the freezer too. You can use it in smoothies later. And then there's something called nice cream, which is a really healthy, easy way to make ice cream in your blender with frozen fruit. Then you have it.

Some stores will have a discounted produce section where they have maybe some slightly bruised or misshapen items. These things are going to taste fine. They can still be used in cooking. So, if your store has one of those, obviously you're going to want to check that out.

In particular for vegetables, consider going with frozen or canned options. These can be much less expensive than the fresh ones and you don't risk throwing out tons of wilted produce that didn't get eaten. The frozen and canned varieties may actually be a little bit more nutritious and flavorful because they were picked right when they were at the prime of ripeness versus the fresh produce that has to be picked before it's ripe so that it doesn't spoil during transportation.

Of course, when you're shopping, you're going to want to be mindful of local prices and see if you can find the best deals in your town, wherever you live. Now that we have access to the internet, we can look online and see what's on sale at different stores, compare prices, see who has the best coupons, things like that. Here in Texas, our chain, H E B (if you're in Texas, you know, everybody loves H E B) uh, they have coupons that you can use both in the store and on their online shopping app.

So let me offer a few fast and inexpensive plant-based meal ideas to get you started. As a bonus, I'll include links to a few of my favorite recipes in the show notes at www.eatgreenswithdrblack.com. One of my favorite breakfasts is just good old-fashioned oatmeal.



Eat Your Greens with Dr. Black | plant-based nutrition for the whole family

And I have to take a little aside here and tell you a story. Uh, I have this little patient whose family is from Australia. And when he was younger, every time he came into the office for a visit, and I would ask him, “what do you like to eat”? He would tell me, porridge. So, you know, I'm from the United States. I had no idea what porridge is. I thought porridge was something that, you know, maybe they ate in Scotland back in the 1800s or something. I didn't know that people still ate porridge. So, I asked his mom, “What, what is it? What's porridge”? Turns out, it's just oatmeal. So now every time I have a bowl of oatmeal for breakfast, I have to think of him and smile. Anyways, go with the plain old fashioned rolled oats. They're cheaper than those little instant packages, and you don't get all of that added sugar and whatever other stuff they like to put in there. Then you can add whatever toppings you like. Things, most people like to do things like dried fruit, fresh fruit, nuts, seeds. You can put in a little honey or maple syrup. Try not to go too heavy on the sugar, of course. Some people even like to do something like peanut butter. So, whatever you like, go for it. Personally, I'm an oatmeal minimalist. What do I mean by that? I don't like to add a lot of extra stuff. I take some oatmeal in a bowl, I sprinkle some cinnamon, and I add in some raisins. Sometimes I'll add in some roasted pumpkin seeds too, just to give it a little extra crunch. I add just enough water to cover it, and I microwave it for about a minute and a half.

That's it. I'm done. It's tasty, it's super low fat, no extra sugar, and it's ready in two minutes or less. An extra bonus you get with oatmeal is that it's great for constipation. In a future episode, we're going to talk about how to treat constipation and oatmeal with raisins is one of the best breakfasts you can give your kid when they're backed up.

Moving on to lunch: One of my favorite things to do is to make a Buddha bowl. A Buddha bowl is just, it's like a grain bowl. Think about what you get at Chipotle or something like that. I like to do one with a mix of brown rice and quinoa, some chickpeas and edamame, and then I add in the, like some cut up cherry tomatoes. I'll pan roast some corn, maybe chop up some cucumbers. Another, I also really like roasted sweet potatoes in mine. And then you can also mix in whatever healthy dressing you like.

Of course, the cheapest thing you can have for lunch is the leftovers from the dinner you made last night. So, consider making a little extra and pack it up to take with you.

Moving on to dinner. I like to do one-pot wonders. Not only are they convenient and they can be very cost effective, but hey, everybody's happy when there are



Eat Your Greens with Dr. Black | plant-based nutrition for the whole family

fewer dishes to wash at the end of the meal. The one-pot wonder recipe that I'm including in the show notes is for a pinto bean pozole. This comes from my favorite food blogger, Cookie and Kate. Wouldn't it be great if I could reach out to Kate one day and maybe get her to do an interview for the Eat Your Greens with Dr. Black podcast? That would be awesome. Until then, I'm just going to keep adding links to her recipes on my show, in my show notes.

Alright, well that about wraps it up for this Small Bite episode. I hope I've given you some ideas about ways you can save money and keep your grocery bill down while still choosing more nutritious options. Contrary to popular belief, a healthy, plant predominant diet does not have to be more expensive than your standard American options - and it's a whole lot healthier. We didn't even touch on the savings that you're going to get with the lower medical bills that can come with following a whole food plant-based diet. For more on that, go back and listen to episode 3 where I did a deep dive into what a whole food plant-based diet is and some of the health benefits that you can get from it.

I hope I've inspired you to make your grocery list and head out to the grocery store empowered to save money. Thanks for listening and don't forget to eat your greens.