

How costly is healthy eating?



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When we were first learning to cook, my friends and I would plan a meal and head to the grocery store. Imagine our disappointment when a healthy, home-cooked meal often cost over \$30 for ingredients — for only three to four people.

If the average cost per person is more than \$8, it feels hard to justify cooking at home when we all could have gone to Taco Bell for half the price. On top of all that, we had to cook our own food. The horror! All of my rosy visions of eating healthier and saving money disappeared — not to mention my cooking often let me down in a way that a grilled stuffed burrito would never do.

This story is common. I have had many conversations with people who feel a little peeved when they set out to eat healthier. Is it more expensive to eat healthy? This is a tough question to answer but last December,

the Harvard School of Public Health published findings about the cost of a healthier diet.

This is what they found: choosing the healthiest option over the cheapest option is going to cost you \$1.50 more per day if you are trying to get the same number of calories. This is because healthy foods generally have fewer calories than unhealthy ones — a hamburger will always have more calories than a tuna sandwich.

Eating healthy provides enormous benefits for your health and well-being, but if you still think \$1.50 a day is too much you may be able to cut it down even more. The study found that the largest difference in price was in choosing unprocessed, lean meat over fatty, processed meats. The lowest price difference was between dairy items. So if you want to eat healthy and spend less, focus on deriving protein from beans, nuts and healthy dairy products like milk, eggs and cottage cheese. Even more importantly, focus on purchasing more inexpensive fruits and vegetables.