



Tame Your Grocery Bill

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

Grocery prices steadily increased in recent years due to the pandemic, supply chain issues, and shortages of transportation and labor. All of this adds up to sticker shock at the cash register, but there are some things you can do to lower your grocery bill.

The largest price increases have occurred in meat, dairy and seafood products. With animal-based food prices going up, it makes sense to add more affordable plant-based proteins to your plate, such as tofu, beans and lentils. Studies show that plant-based diets cost up to 34% less than animal-based diets. Even a flexitarian plan, where you eat meat, fish or poultry occasionally, can cut costs by 14%.

Shop with a grocery list, so you only get what you need and don't duplicate what you have already. Buy what's in season and what's on sale. After you shop, use the most perishable foods first before they go bad and go to waste. Remember to compare prices as you shop. Often generic or store brands cost less than the leading brands and offer the same high quality.

You can often save money by opting for frozen or canned vegetables, fruit, beans and fish — and they are just as nutritious as fresh. Buying foods in a near-natural state will save money, too — for example, whole carrots and a head of lettuce cost less than baby-cut carrots and bagged salad. You pay for the ready-made convenience, but you may not need to.

Finally, it may help to use a credit card or store-based loyalty card that offers cash back on grocery purchases, or redeemable points that you can put toward free groceries.

Got Noisy Joints?

Sounds in the knees are fairly common. You may hear a snapping or clicking sound when you bend or straighten your knees, or when you walk or go up or downstairs. Called **crepitus** (Latin for **rattle**), this can also occur in shoulder, elbow or neck joints. Often, the older you get, the louder the noise.



Benign (painless) crepitus is caused by the rubbing of cartilage on the joint surface or other soft tissues around the joints during joint movement, likely a result of air movement in the joint. The mechanics of your knees and other joints naturally make some level of noise when they're in use.

Crepitus with pain can be a sign of arthritis, dysfunction of the patellofemoral joint (between the knee cap and the thigh bone), injury with scar tissue, a meniscus tear or a tendon moving over a bony prominence within the joint.

Even though benign crepitus or a joint clicking sound is not typically harmful or unhealthy, it can be annoying during exercise or other activities, such as climbing stairs, or simply rising from sitting.

Effective solutions for reducing joint clicking or pain during movement: Adopt a gentle stretching routine prior to strenuous physical activity or exercise. In addition, focus on muscle training exercises that strengthen your knees, legs and neck to lessen crepitus.

If you have regular joint noises accompanied by pain and/or swelling, consult your health care provider.



September is Prostate Cancer Awareness Month.



Q: Prostate cancer screening?

A: The American Cancer Society recommends a discussion with your health care provider about prostate cancer screening starting at age 50 for men at average risk. Men at increased risk should have the discussion earlier — usually at age 40 or 45, depending on the level of risk.

For men at high risk, the discussion should occur at age 45. Men at high risk include African Americans and men who have a father or brother who was diagnosed with prostate cancer before age 65.

For men at even higher risk, the discussion should occur at age 40. Men in this group include those with more than one first-degree relative (father or brother) who was diagnosed with prostate cancer before age 65.

Ask about the benefits and risks of prostate cancer screening. If you decide to proceed, screening can be done with a PSA blood test and digital rectal exam.

— Elizabeth Smoots, MD



Note: Due to production lead time, this issue may not reflect the current COVID-19 situation in some or all regions of the U.S. For the most up-to-date information visit [coronavirus.gov](https://www.coronavirus.gov).

Stretching for Life

Beyond building muscle and aerobic fitness, we need to be flexible. Routine stretching moves us in the right direction. It can help keep your muscles flexible and strong while maintaining a healthy range of motion in your joints. Without that flexibility, the muscles shorten and become tight.



For example, tight leg muscles, a common result of long periods of sitting, may inhibit your ability to fully extend your legs and maintain leg strength. Inflexible hamstring muscles across the hip and knee can lead to chronic low back pain.

The primary areas to maintain mobility are in your lower extremities: calves, hamstrings, hip flexors in the pelvis and quadriceps in the front of your thighs. Routinely stretching your shoulders, neck and lower back is also helpful.

Extra benefits: Stretching also improves posture and balance and helps prevent falls.

Goal: Choose a routine stretching program you can perform at least four to five times a week. Review the basics with your health care provider, or learn more at [acsm.org](https://www.acsm.org).

Example: A hamstring stretch can help keep the muscles in the back of your thighs flexible. Sit on the floor with your legs straight in front of you. Bend forward holding your hands down your legs until you feel a mild burn. Hold for 30 seconds; then slowly return to a sitting position.

Stay committed long term. It can save your muscles from becoming stiff, achy and weak — and improve your energy and comfort.



Fall and Winter Allergies

Stuffy noses and sneezing in fall and winter don't always mean you have a cold. Although spring's allergy-provoking pollen is long gone, runny noses and other allergy symptoms can affect some people hard this time of year. The reason? Indoors and out, fall and winter air can be loaded with allergy triggers.

Ragweed is the main fall culprit for allergies. Ragweed pollen rises as autumn begins and persists until there's frost, usually in November. In many places, ragweed pollen levels are highest in early to mid-September. Mold spores, which spike during the hot humid months, are still plentiful this time of year, too.

Fall allergy symptoms often include congestion, itchy eyes and fatigue along with sneezing and coughing. And those with asthma and/or eczema may experience more flare-ups from allergens in fall, according to allergists.

Dry, cold air outside, and sometimes overheated inside air can irritate throats and noses. And being indoors most of the time in winter can expose you to more allergy triggers, including indoor mold spores, dust, dust mites, pet dander and environmental allergens, such as cleaning products.

Vacuuming your home once or twice a week can reduce indoor allergens. Using an air cleaner with a HEPA (high-efficiency particulate air) filter also helps control indoor allergens, advises the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology. Consider using an air filter in your home or onsite office.

Allergy symptoms can be confused with colds, flu or COVID-19. If you have a fever, a persistent or worsening cough, or persistent allergy symptoms, contact your health care provider.



The **Smart Moves Toolkit**, including this issue's printable download, **Save Your Neck**, is at personalbest.com/extras/22V9tools.



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