



Food Shopping the Proper Way

Healthy Shopping and Food Trap Alerts



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Introduction: Why the Purchase of Your Food May Be One of the Most Important Factors in Your Weight Loss Efforts



You head to the grocery store, and most of the time it's in a sort of a daze. So many of us take this common household chore for granted and don't exactly look forward to it. The whole act of making the list, picking out the food, getting it in and out of the car, and unloading and putting it away at home can be exhausting. You need food though, so you go through the motions week after week.

While you are muddling through this weekly or even daily chore, you may not realize just how important it may be to your weight loss efforts. So few of us actually take the time to really think about what we are putting into our carts each visit. We go through the motions and likely grab the same types of items all the time. We have our list and get any specialty items for a recipe or occasion, but that's about it. When was the last time that you really thought about what you were putting in your cart?

If you are on the quest for weight loss, then you should be thinking about this long and hard, the reason being that so much of your weight loss efforts are around the foods that you prepare, cook, and eat at home. Consider the home the epicenter of your weight loss journey, and so you need to have the right food to support your quest for good healthy eating. We talk often about how going out to eat can be difficult. Well, if you're not putting forth the necessary thought and effort with trips to the grocery store, then you can be setting yourself up for failure even at home.

The healthy shopping trip can take time and practice. This isn't a behaviour or practice that is learned overnight. Truthfully it may be a work in progress, as so few of us know exactly what we need to lose weight. If we were eating all the right things, then we wouldn't have to lose weight in the first place. The problem stems from lacking knowledge about what foods are right, or finding it too difficult to maintain the right practices on a daily basis. If you want to lose weight, then you need to start paying closer attention to the foods that you are buying at the grocery store - this could singlehandedly make the difference!

So why is it so critical to your weight loss success?



So we know that you need to be paying closer attention to your grocery shopping trips if you are after long-term weight loss—but why? Why is it that a trip to the grocery store and the items that you put in your cart are so vital to your success?

This is often misunderstood and therefore underestimated by the very people who are trying so hard to lose weight in the first place. The problem is that without this knowledge and without proper education, you are likely missing the mark and therefore going through a very unsuccessful cycle.

If you are working toward long-term weight loss, then you need to know first and foremost that the foods that you prepare and eat at home build the basis for your dietary regimen. If you get used to eating healthy and natural foods, then that's what you are going to start building upon.

If you start baking foods in the oven or sautéing them in a bit of olive oil, then that's what you will want to order when you go out. Not only will your tastes change along with the foods that you prepare and eat at home, but this will become your new style.

The changes may happen quickly in some instances, and others may take time. You will start to see how much better you feel when you are fuelling your body properly. When you start to enjoy the right foods, you wonder why you hadn't been doing this all along. You have a natural energy, you are sick less, you just feel good. So yes, food in fact does have some major power in your weight loss efforts and your health.

So why does your grocery shopping play such a vital role in this whole weight loss journey?

Here you can see why you should be paying closer attention:

- **The foods you buy will create the foundation needed for weight loss:**
If you are purchasing cookies and chips, then that's setting you up for failure. However, if you make a list full of fresh fruits and vegetables, lean proteins, and whole grains, and fill your cart with them, then that's what you will be focusing on and eating. Your grocery trips can be a very powerful tool in your journey!
- **You will start to see the right ways to prepare foods:**
When you are purchasing items such as cooking spray and olive oil rather than regular margarine and "bad fat" alternatives, you start to get into the habit of cooking right. By baking, broiling, grilling, and steaming your food, you start to see that this is the right way to do it. You need the right ingredients from the store to do this.
- **You have control over the foods that you eat and the way in which you prepare them:**
You are in control when you cook and eat at home. That's why the weight loss effort is so dependent upon what you do at home. You should be cooking more, spending more time preparing your food, and really getting to see and enjoy the way that food was meant to be eaten. This will become the center of all eating activities and what you measure everything else against.
- **Most of your weight loss effort should start at home:**
When you are at home, you are in control; and when you are in control, you can monitor just how much you are eating. You have the power at home to really make an impact on your weight loss efforts and so the food that you buy and eat is a big part of this.
- **You should be eating at home more when you are trying to lose weight:**
Sure we all love to go out to eat, but that's not necessarily a wise decision at first with your weight loss efforts. Sure you will get there and you can make educated decisions with ordering, but that will come as you get practice. Truthfully, most of your eating should happen at home if you are after long-term weight loss.

- **This starts to teach you good solid healthy eating habits:**
When you see what a proper portion looks like, then your eyes are really opened up to how much you were eating before. When you taste what fresh food really can be, then you start to crave it. The right eating habits start at home, with you in the driver's seat.
- **You can start to experiment with different healthy foods and build upon your repertoire:**
As you get used to new fruits, you can incorporate a new one every week. If you have never tried broiled salmon, then cooking it at home is a great way to experiment. You start to really build up your repertoire and your tastes when you get the right foods as your basis for the home.
- **Having the right foods with you at all times can prepare you for anything:**
You must always be prepared when it comes to weight loss. That means that you must keep healthy snacks such as rye crackers and fresh fruits with you. This is yet another aspect of what you should be thinking through when it comes to the grocery store trips.
- **You are much less likely to fall into any common pitfalls with home preparation:** If you are prepared, then you are less likely to fall. So cooking your own food, bringing your own healthy snacks with you, and having the knowledge and the tools to help you eat better will all come with proper grocery shopping.

It All Starts at Home



You probably never thought that there was that much invested in a trip to the grocery store, did you? So much of your weight loss efforts start with you in the driver's seat. You must take control over your mind-set, you must take control over your fitness regimen, and you must take control over your eating habits. That part starts with having the right foods on hand and learning to enjoy them for the nutrients that they offer.

There's nothing to say that healthy eating has to be boring. You can really enjoy this process and have fun with it. Learning how to cook right means opening new doors and getting in tune with what your body really needs. This can be a great experiment, but you must first arm yourself with the right tools. The foods that you have on hand at home may very well be your most important tools in jumpstarting your weight loss efforts. This time will be different!

If you can start to see that these foods really matter then you will begin to put more effort into your choices at the grocery store. Making a list, looking for healthy recipes, and trying out new healthy ideas can be inspiring and easier than you might think. If you start to make the grocery trips a ritual in health then you can embrace them for all that they can offer you. Though you may not have control over every area of your life, you most certainly do at the grocery store. First and foremost, become a label-reader: if you're after weight loss, then reading food labels is exponentially important, as they guide you as to whether something is good or not. You see now how many reasons there are for good healthy preparation, cooking, and eating. So you really want to make it count!

Weight loss is all about preparation and having a plan. This absolutely must incorporate plenty of the right foods on hand and learning how to cook it up into healthy and delicious dishes. Find

inspiration in this and have fun with it, you just might be surprised at how well it works for you! There is much to be said for making your trip to the grocery store a healthy one, so get tuned into what this means and truly make it your own.

2 Types of Foods Sold: Fresh, Canned, Frozen — What are the Differences and Benefits of Each?

If you haven't spent much time thinking about your grocery shopping, then you probably never really paid that much attention to certain aspects of it either. So many of us put together our lists each and every trip and just focus on the same old foods. We are creatures of habit and if we have used a certain product for years then that's what we tend to gravitate to. Why fix it if it's not broken, right?

While it's fine to enjoy some of the same old foods, there may be much more out there that you haven't even discovered. Not only that, but there could be better ways of enjoying the same foods in a much healthier way. Sure we may buy fresh foods such as apples, but is that where it ends? If we're really being honest with ourselves, are there certain foods that we could be enjoying in a much healthier or enjoyable manner?

As you start to become more aware of your surroundings in the grocery store, you may wonder what the differences are between certain foods. Is there really a big difference between whole grains vs. refined versions of the same breads? Can you really get significantly less calories from a boneless chicken breast than other cuts? Is it worth it to stock up on the right healthy foods to sustain you?

When you see the results start showing in the mirror and on the scale, you feel instantly inspired. You want to do more and more to keep the momentum going. If you don't start at this point, then chances are that you will come across the age-old debate of fresh vs. canned vs. frozen foods. Is there really a difference between them? What is the difference? How can you make sure to keep your weight loss efforts going and still keep your budget under control when it comes to these foods? If you need a bit of education, then you are not alone. This is a big part of grocery shopping and so it's time to break it down once and for all.

Fresh Foods



Fresh is always the way to go if you have it available to you. This is where you should be spending a great deal of your time when you are grocery shopping. There is no processing to fresh foods, there are usually no real additives, and it comes to you from the earth directly. You do want to be conscientious of what's in season when it comes to fresh fruits and vegetables. If you buy out of season you are potentially going to invest a lot of extra money and also get the produce from another area of the world, and pesticides and preservatives may very well be used in the process.

There are a few things to keep in mind with fresh foods. Though they are your first choice when grocery shopping, you do need to consider the pros, cons, benefits, and potential drawbacks such as:

- **Consider fresh for as many fruits and vegetables as possible:**
This is where you want to start your grocery shopping trip and spend the most time. Scour the produce aisles for as many fresh fruits and vegetables that you already like or that you can try, and fill your cart with them. In summer, you might have more of a selection than in colder months, but these are always your best bet!
- **Buy whatever you can in season:**
Buying in season is an important consideration. The reason being is that you know that the produce comes in the most logistically appealing way. Most of the goods in season will

come from nearby and won't be full of additives. Not only that, but when you buy fresh in season then you are ensuring that you keep your budget under control too.

- **Consider buying fresh for other items such as meat:**
Stretch your fresh buying habits to fresh meat if possible over frozen. Whenever possible try to fill your cart with the freshest ingredients offered across the store, even herbs if at all possible.
- **Fresh food always have the strongest nutrient content and most flavor:**
You are going to enjoy the healthiest and best-tasting foods when they are fresh. Not only will they give you the most nutrients, but they will also taste the best too. There's nothing like a vine-ripened tomato or a fresh piece of pineapple!
- **Fresh foods will perish the fastest:**
On the downside is the fact that fresh fruits and vegetables will definitely perish the fastest. By virtue of the fact that they are fresh, they will go bad far more quickly than any of the other options. You want to really think about what you buy and then use it in a timely manner to ensure you don't waste it.
- **Buy local as much as possible:**
Buying local often ensures you will get the freshest food in the best condition, with the least need for preservatives, and certainly with the least nutrient loss.
- **Fresh foods can be expensive in some instances:**
If you are buying out of season or looking for specialty items, fresh foods can tend to get expensive sometimes. This is unexpected for some, and so it's important to know. This shouldn't deter you, but should ensure that you consider buying in season.
- **Fresh foods may not always be available:**
Though you may be looking for a fresh watermelon in December, it may not always be there. Consider where you do your grocery shopping and know that sometimes it just doesn't make sense for the store to carry each and every fresh item all year long. Know how to substitute with other seasonal items in the same food group to meet your nutritional needs and match your personal taste.

Fresh should always be your first choice, but there is of course a reality to it. Just be wise and if at all possible buy fresh versions of certain staples such as apples, bananas, oranges, berries, greens, carrots, and asparagus. You can still enjoy some health benefits out of frozen or canned, but just not to the same degree. Fresh is the way to go, but if you can't find it or have some other reasons for the other options, then at least know what you are getting with your purchase.

Frozen Foods



If fresh is best, then frozen is the next closest in the categories. Frozen foods, particularly fruits and vegetables, are as close to the real thing as you can get. They contain nearly the same levels of nutrients and can mix well into recipes. They are easy to stock and therefore can make a great addition to any dish that you are making that calls for these items. Though many people turn their nose up at frozen foods, there are a lot of great things about them, particularly the convenience factor.

Frozen foods are items commonly found in shopping carts everywhere. They can take many different forms, but they are always prepared in the same sort of manner. If you are on a quest for weight loss, then the frozen foods that you should be focusing on now include whole, single-ingredient foods such as frozen vegetables, fruits, lean meat/fish/poultry/vegan protein, and similar healthy fare. The days of processed frozen foods are gone!

For some reason, frozen fruits, vegetables, and even meats got a bad reputation years back, and there's no real merit to that. Sure frozen foods may not offer the same nutrients as their fresh counterparts, but they are still quite valuable in the long run. They still offer some great nutritional content, and they are as close to fresh as you can possibly get as an alternative. Many vegetables and some fruits are blanched and frozen immediately after picking – at the peak of their nutritional content. This means that many of the nutrients stay intact, and that's good for you. While some nutrients are lost in the preservation process, the loss may be comparable to that incurred in the transport of non-local fresh produce over great distances, as occurs in some countries. Additionally, their preservation does not involve the high quantities of salt sometimes involved in production of other non-fresh foods.

Many people like to turn to frozen foods because they offer them options. Frozen foods are available year round, and they are quite affordable. Though there's nothing like fresh green

beans in the summer months, for example, you can't always find them readily during the cold weather months – and getting a bag of frozen green beans is something that you can always do. It is best to buy in season, but with frozen foods, you don't have to limit yourself. This really ups the variety at your fingertips!

Knowing all of this, though, there are some important considerations for selecting frozen foods. If you want to be knowledgeable in this area, then be aware of the following elements:

- **Frozen foods do capture the health factor of the food:**
If you are looking for a nice alternative to fresh fruits and vegetables in terms of nutritional value, then frozen is a close second. The way that the food is frozen means that they are probably picked and packed quickly, so the nutrients stay intact. There is a longer shelf life, so there may be a few preservatives or very little added salt involved in the freezing process, but most of the time just freezing it proves to be enough.
- **Frozen foods can be the most convenient around:**
If you want to be able to find something to which you always have access and which are easy enough to cook and use, then frozen will never let you down. Frozen foods are accessible and convenient, and therefore make a very popular option in the food baskets of many shoppers.
- **These are some of the more affordable options out there:**
Though canned foods may be the most cost effective out there, frozen foods are quite affordable as well. Frozen tends to rank in the middle, and since they are almost as nutritious as fresh and almost as cheap as canned, so they are a nice alternative.
- **Frozen foods do go bad at some point:**
Though it does take a while for it to happen, frozen foods can eventually no longer taste appealing. They can get “freezer burn” and become coated in ice and even wilt as a result. You can usually see this upon opening the package, and the less than desirable taste and texture will give it away every time.
- **Some say that frozen foods don't have the same flavor as fresh:**
Sure frozen are close in make-up to fresh foods, but they just aren't exactly the same. There is nothing like the taste of a fresh fruit or vegetable, and therefore frozen foods sometimes just aren't the first choice for taste alone.

Ideally, you want to have a good combination of frozen and fresh foods to line your cart. That way you are sure to enjoy the convenience, variety, and affordability of frozen foods and the taste and nutritional value of fresh food. When you can find that nice combination, it works really well. As you work into your new routine and start creating your new grocery lists, do be sure to also add canned foods to it as well. Though many tend to skip past canned foods, there are some instances where these can be one of the best options out there.

Canned Foods



For whatever reason, canned foods seem to be mocked by many. Perhaps it is because they have a super long shelf life. Perhaps it is because they are so affordable that it seems wrong to some. For some, it is the added sodium. Whatever the reason, somewhere along the way, canned foods got a bad reputation more so than any other type in the grocery store. There are, however, some inherent virtues to this type of food and therefore you want to keep tuned into them as you create your shopping list each week.

Do you want to exist only on canned foods? No, of course not, but realistically you aren't going to exist only on fresh or frozen either! Canned foods do have many virtues, such as their affordability, convenience, and shelf life. Sometimes this can make the difference between avoiding and eating highly nutritious items. You may not necessarily wish to buy everything in canned form, as the taste is sometimes a bit different than fresh or frozen. There are times and certain food groups that may warrant you adding canned foods as a regular fixture on your shopping list.

So what is it about canned foods that make them so great? What would you want to buy in the canned variety? What are the drawbacks to canned foods? Here we take a look at what works with this type of food and what doesn't:

- **Canned foods are very affordable:**
This may be the thing that draws people to canned foods more than any other. If you are a lover of canned foods, it's likely because they are affordable in nature – that makes them hard to resist. So if you want to get in your fill of healthy foods, some canned varieties can certainly help with the shopping budget.
- **Certain foods, such as beans, are the best kind to get canned:**
Many of us don't have time to clean, prepare, and cook items such as dried beans. Therefore, the canned type are not only healthy and close in terms of taste and nutrients, but they may be the favored option with such foods to ensure you actually eat them. This may not be true for every food, but when it comes to something such as beans, you can't go wrong with the canned variety.
- **Canned foods are very convenient and stand the test of time:**
You can keep canned foods on your shelves safely sometimes even for years. They stand up well to the test of time, and they are very convenient to use. Sometimes all you have to do is open and heat and you're done – it doesn't get much more convenient than that!
- **Some foods just don't taste the same in the canned variety:**
The biggest drawback is that the taste just isn't the same. Since the canning process runs differently than freezing or fresh, the taste can sometimes be compromised. This is the biggest complaint and potential drawback to these types of foods overall.
- **There may be more preservatives used in this type of food offering:**
In order to give them their long shelf life, there may be preservatives and/or sodium (salt) used to prepare and hold the foods. Therefore these preservatives make for an unsavory ingredient to many people and turns them away from canned foods overall.
- **Canned foods may not have the same nutritional value as other options:**
Though there are still some nutrients, canned foods rank lowest on the list for nutritional value. Yes there are still some nutrients, but significantly less than fresh or frozen.

Now you can see the virtues of each and every type food. There are some definite pros and cons with each type of food, and therefore that is precisely why a nice combination works well. Think through some of your favorite fruits and vegetables as well as other foods as you put together your shopping list. You will start to see that some work well in certain categories and not in others. It just takes some practice to master which foods work in which category according to your tastes and cooking style.

There is no right or wrong here, but it always helps to be educated. If you want to take control over your weight loss journey, then you need to start including offerings from fresh, frozen, and canned foods. There are so many great ways to utilize them in recipes, in snacks, and just in every day eating. You can mix and match until you come up with a style that fits you. Just when you get comfortable, switch it up a bit. Try canned cherries or frozen berries this week and then

perhaps fresh mango the next. That's what makes this fun and keeps you inspired in your weight loss efforts.

Being educated makes you a smart consumer and a better advocate for losing the weight and keeping it off. If you aren't sure, then try something and then experiment until you get it right. Now you have the information in terms of benefits and potential drawbacks, so use it to help you develop a master shopping list that you can tweak as you get more experienced. Weight loss should be fun in some ways, particularly when it comes to the new foods that you try and the way in which you prepare them.

3

How to Read Food Labels — What's Important and What's Not?



So you hear how important it is to read food labels, and though you know that it's true, you may not be sure what to look for exactly. There is a lot of information contained on food labels but some it may be quite confusing. There may be things that you can't even pronounce and items on there that you don't really understand. Even more confusing is what you should really care about in terms of weight loss.

If you're after weight loss, then reading food labels is exponentially important. This will show you what you are about to eat and how much of it you should eat. It can also help to spell out very easily to the trained eye if something is good or not. When you are interested in weight loss, then sometimes it's all about weighing out your options. With food labels, that weighted decision becomes a bit easier.

Defining food labels and using them to help you make educated decisions becomes easier the more that you practice it. Though you may start out not having a clue about them, you will quickly become an expert. You will also see why so many people walk through the grocery store aisles and stop to read a label before making a purchasing decision. Obviously if a food is fresh, natural and comes from the earth, then no food label is necessary. It's when you get into processing foods and adding filler or other ingredients that the labels are crucial.

To add to your grocery shopping experience, you must really focus on reading labels. If you aren't already in the practice of it, then it's time to get started. There may even be some hidden items that you hadn't thought about which you should consider. The more well versed that you become in reading food labels, the healthier and more productive your grocery shopping trip

will become. If you aren't sure about something then just pick up the item and turn it over—the label will tell the whole story. So as to make your job easier, here are the key factors that you should be focusing on when you look at food labels.

Serving Size

This may tell the whole story right then and there. If you want to know if a food is worthwhile, then just read the serving size. For example, if you can only have three crackers and that yields a whole chunk of your carbohydrates for the day, is it worth it? This can be a tricky portion of the food label though, because it can seem innocent enough until you start digging.

Sometimes it will give you the serving size in small increments so as to show off a reasonable calorie or fat count. Be in tune to this! Read what the actual serving size is and what that includes—so know what an ounce looks like, for example. You may need to weigh out your food or actually count how many servings are in a package. This will help you to keep on track and more importantly, decide if the food in question is even worth it or not.

Ingredient List

Here's another key area on food labels and probably where you will spend a lot of your time. Understanding what exactly is contained within a certain food is the whole essence of why they make food labels. If you think that it's only about the serving size, then you're missing half the equation. It's a combination of the two and a few other more minor factors thrown in.

You want to know what exactly you're eating, particularly when it comes to weight loss. You will start to see the correlation between weight loss and the ingredients or ways in which food is prepared. For example, if you see something like "palm oil" or an overabundance of sodium, then you'll know that this likely isn't a super healthy food. Understand that the order of ingredients becomes quite important too. The order that the ingredient is listed tells the story of how much is contained within. The first few ingredients listed are of the highest concentration, and it goes down from there until the last item with the lowest concentration.

So if you see a food that seems healthy but the first ingredient is salt, you may want to reconsider. Don't be surprised if many foods list water as the first ingredient, as it may be used to preserve or to hold it all together. This is common, and therefore you should start to understand what keeps certain foods and what makes them up. You can make the right decision for your eating and become in tune when you encounter a new item at the grocery store. This is what reading food labels is all about!

Fat Grams

Yes, you are going to spend a lot of your time focused on this portion of the food label, but as you will see, it's about a much bigger picture overall. You do want to see first-hand how much fat is in the food that you are about to purchase. You must, however, compare it against serving size, as it can be very deceiving. You may see that a food has a reasonable number of fat grams, say 5, for example. Then look immediately at the serving size, as it can be tricky: if the amount is for two little crackers, the fat content is no longer attractive. Very deceiving indeed!

Not only do you want to look at total fat, but also at saturated and unsaturated fat, as well as *trans*-fat. The more saturated fat there is, the more likely that fat is going to stick with you and clog your arteries. The more *trans*-fat there is, or the higher the omega-6 fatty acid content compared to omega-3, the more likely that sticky fat is going to cause trouble, and the more you raise your risk of diseases such as cancer. So you want to aim for items that have little-to-no saturated fat, no *trans*-fat per serving, and good fats in the ingredients list. This is a tall order and may not be as easy to find as you would hope, but that's why you read the food labels in the first place. The more you read, the more you know!

Nutrients – Including Vitamins, Minerals, and Fiber

Though you should always be aware of your nutrients in a given day, this is often the last part of the food label that many people look at. On most food labels, you can see exactly what you are getting in terms of vitamins, minerals, and other key nutrients such as fiber. This can really help to show you how well-balanced the food is, as the higher the concentration of vitamin C, for example, the better it may be for you.

You can also see what sort of percentage it fulfills of a daily requirement, and this can help you shape your menu for the day. It can be a great exercise to look at the nutritional value of foods and start to create menus in your head based on these. If you pick up a can of soup for example, looking at fiber may help you to decide if in the end it's worth the sodium. You do want a good offering of fiber each day to keep yourself feeling full longer and to keep your weight loss efforts on track.

Nutrients can also contribute to your energy level, building up your immune system, and keeping your body running smoothly. Though they may not be the first place that you look, you should use them as a consideration in your food purchase. They can really make a difference in the long run, and contribute to a healthier and happier life overall.

Reading food labels should become a big part of how you shop. Though it may take some practice, in no time at all it will become second nature. This will help you to understand if a food is good or not, and most certainly will allow you to determine if it's worthy of your

consumption. There are some foods that are natural and make label-reading easy, and then others that are so complex that they aren't even worth the time.

Do take the time in your grocery shopping trips to read labels and make this process work for you. This can be a time-consuming exercise at the beginning, but it's a necessary one if you hope to continue on your weight loss journey. Do take the time to practice this and use it to help shape your list overall. This is yet another key to your weight loss success and how you make grocery shopping work for you!

Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO)

Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) are crops or animals that have undergone artificial insertion of genes from other food crops or animals.¹ GMOs are quite controversial, in that they are the result of relatively new technologies that many people are concerned could have serious drawbacks. Research in this field has revealed negative effects of some GMOs in laboratory animals, and little is known about the long-term effects on the human consumer. Some of these negative effects include increased eating as well as abnormal metabolism of insulin, glucose, and blood fats, which in turn can result in unhealthy weight gain and associated disorders.

GM labelling is required in Australia, New Zealand, India, China, the United Kingdom, and several other European countries, whereas it is not required in the United States, Canada, and South Africa. If you live in a state or country where GMO labeling is mandatory, this may make avoidance easier if desired, but it is still often up to the consumer to know where GMOs may be, and how to avoid them. It sounds simple, but these lists are constantly in flux, due to government approvals and market withdrawals. If you are interested, you can stay updated through online databases such as the [GM Approval Database](#) or [GMO Compass](#). Companies may voluntarily label products as "non-GMO," though this is not generally required and so is not universal. Some products limit their claim to only one particular "at-risk" ingredient such as soy lecithin, listing it as "non-GMO," and any one of the rest of the ingredients may be GMO if the product in its entirety is not labeled as non-GMO. Certified organic products do not contain any GMOs, so the "organic" label is a legal term assuring no GM. However if the term organic is only in the list of ingredients and not found anywhere else on the package, then any non-organic ingredient may be GMO.

¹ What are referred to currently as GMO fruits and vegetables should not be confused with hybrid products. A hybrid refers to offspring resulting from the interbreeding between two animals or plants of different species, a process known as "hybridization". Hybridization of a number of key food crops has been performed by humans for centuries, for many of the same goals as GMO production. Hybrid vegetables have a favorable public opinion, since they are produced non-invasively and have been used commercially for centuries.

Crops currently known to have the highest rates of GM production are currently corn (even some sweet corn), soybeans, canola, and cottonseed. Various grains and fruits are also known to have GM versions, including apples, lettuce, sugar beets, and squash such as zucchini and yellow crookneck. Some legumes other than soybean are GMOs, but these are largely limited to use in developing countries. A coding system enables identification of GM fruits and vegetables: if there are five numbers in the PLU code, and the number starts with “8”, this tells you that the item is a genetically modified fruit or vegetable whereas if there are five numbers in the PLU code, and the number starts with “9”, the produce and is not genetically modified.

GM components are often present in mixed foods, primarily processed foods. This includes cereals, breads, snack foods, snack and sports bars, meal replacements, frozen dinners and convenience foods, among many others. These tend to rely heavily on GM soy and corn in particular.

GM crops are often given to conventionally-raised livestock, making the resulting eggs, fish, fowl, meat, or dairy sources of GMO – these would not necessarily fall under the required GM labelling laws, but are sources nonetheless.

The bottom line is that if you wish to avoid GMO, try to get what you can from food labeling, even if you are not in a country that mandates full disclosure. When in doubt, you can turn to organic foods for items at higher risk of containing GMOs. For more on certified organic products, see the Trim Down Club article [When to Go Organic](#).

How to Prepare for Shopping



So now that you have an idea of what to look for and why grocery shopping is so important, it's time to get started. There are some great ways to help shape your grocery shopping trip into a productive one for your weight loss efforts. As we have stated before, the key to better eating habits and weight loss success is in your preparation. If you can find a way to get more in tune with the right foods to eat and the best ways to shop for them, then you are going to surpass your wildest expectations.

In preparing for your shopping trip, you do want to take into consideration all that you have learned as well as your lifestyle and own habits. Some people simply don't have the time to grocery shop as frequently as others. Some may find that as they move through their week, going once is enough, while others need to go more often for the freshest foods. There is no right or wrong here, but there are ways to get more prepared and be more productive.

Yes you can shop at a better time of day than others. No it does not make sense to go on an empty stomach. These aren't myths, but rather truths about the way in which we shop and what we shop for. If you want to really make each trip to the grocery store count towards your weight loss efforts, then you want to be aware of the most common pitfalls and steps

towards success. These will not only make you more productive, but also ensure that you are on the right track.

Yes, indeed, there are some excellent ways to get the most out of your grocery shopping trip. You can really utilize all of your weight loss tips and common sense, and end up with a cart full of healthy products and an exercise in willpower. We will show you how to overcome even the biggest pitfalls and enjoy what is sure to become a new healthy regular routine. Gone are the bad habits and here are the ways to make your trip to the store work for you every single time.

Some Basics to Remember

You do want to keep in mind that perhaps your habits and plans for the grocery store weren't necessarily working well in the past. If you felt that you were rushing through, that you were throwing things in the cart without thought, or that you ended up with a whole lot of items that you didn't want or need, then it's time to change things. First and foremost, go in with a plan and be sure that you stick to it. Here are a few fundamental questions to be asking yourself and to keep in mind as you prepare for that next trip to the grocery store.

What is the best time of day to go to the grocery store?

You never want to go to the grocery store when you are hungry, and so your trip should come after you've eaten a meal. Ideally you want to go in the morning after you've had breakfast, as you will feel satisfied and ensure that you don't buy out of hunger.

You also will find in the morning that the fresh produce is freshest and that you have the best selection of everything, as it has just been stocked. This gives you a jump start on your day and allows you to focus on your list when your mind is sharp and you are motivated to eat all the right foods. Selection is everything at the grocery store, and if you are focused and motivated, then you are bound to make better choices. Go after breakfast and see how much more efficient and fruitful your trip to the store really is.

Why it is important not to be hungry when you go shopping?

This is not just a myth, as hunger can really have an impact on your grocery shopping. Though you may go with a list in hand and the best of intentions, your hunger may get the best of you. Though you would normally never buy a fresh baked pie or frozen pizza under normal circumstances, when you are hungry everything looks good.

If you have already eaten when you go to the grocery store, then you're not focusing in on every single food around you. It's much easier because you are satisfied, your stomach is full,

and you can maintain focus on only the list. You are far more likely to resist temptation if you have food in your stomach and willpower to go along with it. This may take practice, but even a small snack before you walk through the grocery store doors can work wonders!

How frequently should you do your shopping?

Though some people choose the method of stocking up, others tend to head to the store every week or almost daily. Is there a right or wrong way? Well the answer here is two-fold, because you do want to stock up on certain items, but it is also important to keep have plenty of fresh foods on hand. There is a routine that can work well for you and allow for both.

Try to go to the grocery store about once every couple of weeks or even once a month to stock up on canned, frozen, or dry staple items such as grains. Frozen chicken or salmon, canned beans, rice, flour – any sort of thing within those categories – can be well-stocked ahead of time so you are always ready to cook.

Then head to the grocery store once a week for the basic fresh items so that you always have those on hand. On this grocery shopping trip, only pick up items such as milk, eggs, yogurt, bread, and of course plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables that are in season. This will keep you on track, keep your budget under control, and ensure that you always have all the right fresh, frozen, and canned goods on hand for healthy eating.

Where is the best place to do your grocery shopping?

This will obviously depend heavily on your geographic location and access to stores. If you have access to a lot of different stores, then do all of your produce shopping at a farmer's market or produce store specifically. If you have access to a large grocery store chain, then use this for your frozen and canned goods. Work with what you've got, and if there is a farmer's market nearby that's always great for buying whatever produce happens to be in season. This takes practice, but it can be a great way of planning for your shopping and making the most out of each trip.

Always be sure to make a detailed grocery shopping list too. Think through the specific stores that you are going to and their set up. Start with the outside perimeter of the store, such as the produce area and the dairy refrigerator, and detail your list from there. Then hit the freezer aisle last with your list so that frozen products are the very last thing you get. By putting in the detail ahead of time, not only will it keep you on track, but it will ensure that you don't forget anything. A little preparation can go a long way, particularly when it comes to healthy eating at your fingertips. This is how you do grocery shopping and get the right results each and every time!

5 What are the Differences between “Diet,” “Light,” “Reduced Fat,” and Low Fat Foods?



You walk down the aisles of the grocery store with your list in hand and your head held high. You have a plan! Just as you focus in on all of the right foods, there is a bit of confusion. You see the aisles before you and you start to focus on some of the best and healthiest ingredients on your list. As you reach for a can of beans, you see that some say “reduced fat”. What does that mean?

Then it starts to become even more confusing as you head to the dairy aisle. You are ready to grab some seemingly healthy containers of yogurt when all of a sudden you see a few that say “light”. Well does that mean that the items that you were about to grab are not light? Does light mean fat-free or just low-fat? Does that mean that it contains no sugar? How can you make sense out of it all?

This is where being a label reader can really come in handy. The challenging thing for many shoppers, most of whom have the very best of intentions, is that there are a whole slew of “diet” label types. How can you decipher what each label really means? You see these and start to understand that there is some major confusion out there. If you thought that it was hard before, it only gets harder when you are really trying to do the right thing for your diet.

It’s All Relative and It’s All Specific Too

When you see a yogurt label that says “reduced fat,” for example, you must ask yourself to what is that relative. Is it reduced fat compared to other brands from this company? Is it a

reduced fat compared to all other yogurts on the market? Most labels that boast any diet words should have an asterisk by them to tell you what is the point of comparison. Many times a reduced fat label means compared to their other brands in the same family, and therefore it may be the best in their category. Is it the best on the market? It may or may not be, and that's why you have to read up and be an informed consumer. If a label doesn't tell you to what it is compared, then you should naturally be a bit sceptical.

Fortunately, after years of random jargon and marketing mumbo jumbo, the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) took steps to stem the confusion. This means that there is now jurisdiction where labelling is concerned.

Do take the time to read the labels, and you just might find the answers that you are seeking more easily than you think. There are a few basic criteria that a product must meet if it can use certain terminology. The following are the current standards for "dietetic" labelling:

- **Less, Fewer, or Reduced:**
At least 25% less of a given nutrient or calories than the comparison food
- **Low-Fat:**
Less than 3 grams of fat per serving
- **Fat-Free:**
Less than 0.5 grams of fat per serving, with no added fat or oil
- **Cholesterol-Free:**
Less than 2 mg cholesterol per serving
- **Low Calorie:**
40 calories or less per serving
- **Light:**
50% or less of fat than the comparison food
- **Sugar Free:**
Less than 0.5 grams of sugar per serving
- **Low Sodium:**
140 mg or less of sodium per serving

So you see what the overriding guidelines are for the types of diet claims that are most commonly made on labels. While this helps to clear it all up, it can be even more confusing if you aren't sure what the comparison food is. This is when reading food labels becomes very

important. Take the knowledge of what these sorts of claims tend to mean and then apply them to your own thorough investigation. Never believe it just because you see it on the front of a package – do a bit of research of your own.

Note that sometimes reducing one thing in a food means increasing another. Some reduced-fat or non-fat foods are higher in sugar or salt than their regular counterparts. Fat-free cookies and chips are notable examples of this. Sometimes even less desirable components are added. Non-fat milk is an example of this, wherein controversial milk “solids” (often used to make up for the color and texture loss when fat is removed) have been linked to the very consequences associated with saturated fats.

Read through the point of comparison, read the ingredients list, understand the diet food, and what it’s all about. Be sure if this is in fact a food that fits in with your diet plans, and then take it or leave it accordingly. If you feel uncomfortable after reading any labels or claims, then the food is not meant for you. It shouldn’t be that hard to define or translate what a food really is or what it is made of. That’s just a waste of your time!

There is one important thing to keep in mind here, and that is just because a food is “reduced fat” or “diet” or fits any other criteria doesn’t mean that it is meant to be eaten in larger quantities. If the food seems too good to be true, then it probably is. So go back to your food label reading and check out the serving size. Just because the fat is reduced doesn’t mean that they didn’t use more sugar to make it taste good. Not only that, but you may find that the serving size goes down dramatically with “reduced calorie” claims.

So many dieters fall into the pitfall or illusion of thinking of a food as “diet” and therefore eating more of it because they think that they can. This never ends well! You can’t just eat endless amounts of the food because it has fewer calories. You still need to be mindful of portions and serving size, and then adjust your eating accordingly. “Diet” doesn’t mean eat more. It just means that it may fit into your diet plan more appropriately. So read your labels, understand claims, and then make your eating decisions accordingly.

6 Conclusion

If you never really thought about grocery shopping before, then chances are that you are now going to give it great thought from here on out. There are so many important considerations when it comes to grocery shopping, and each of these must be kept at the front of your mind. Though you will undoubtedly get into a healthy routine after a couple of trips, it's important to always be mindful of these points.

There are so many great ways to benefit from healthy eating, and it all starts at home. The items with which you fill your cart will help to make a dramatic impact on the way in which you cook, the meals that you prepare, and the snacks that you keep on hand for yourself. As you can see, it's very important to go always go prepared and to stick to your list. Just one derivation can really cost you more fat and weight. There are too many pitfalls, and therefore preparation is critical.

As with any aspect of health or weight loss, preparation is the key. We've talked repeatedly about how your willpower and your ability to prepare can help you through virtually any situation. This holds particularly true for the grocery store. For when we take the time to fully prepare a list and then stick to it, we are making good choices and deeply engaging in our weight loss ritual. It may seem like a rather overwhelming task. It may even be difficult to pass up some of your old favorites, but with a bit of practice, you can overcome even the most tempting foods.

As you go about your food shopping task, keep a few simple but effective things in mind to make your job easier:

- **Always take the time to make a list:**
Think through the store that you are going to, and make your list by section or area. Write down in detail what you need, quantities, and the variety or manner in which it is prepared. Take the time to write a list for yourself and everyone in your family every single time you go to the grocery store, because that's an important part of the process.
- **Stick to the list no matter how tempted you are:**
Yes you are going to see foods that look amazing in the store. Sure you may want to revert to old habits. Sometimes it's just hard to pass up favorite foods or those that are delicious. Fight the urge and stick to your list, and you will be much happier in the long run. It's worth the challenge!
- **Never go to the store hungry:**
There's a reason that they say never to go to the store hungry or to go at certain times during the day. If you are hungry, then you are more apt to cheat and to get foods that

look good at the moment. Try to go in the morning after breakfast, when you are full and focused, or go after you have a small snack so that the hunger doesn't take over.

- **Become a food label reader and always go with your gut instinct:**

If you haven't read labels before, then it's time to get started. This is a great way to be absolutely sure of what you are eating and make good solid decisions accordingly. It takes practice, but understanding serving size, fat, nutrients, and general ingredients can really help to shape your decisions and ensure you eat the right things.

- **When in doubt, never buy a food that seems too good to be true:**

If it seems too good to be true, then it may not be so good. If a label says "light," "diet," or "reduced fat," then be sure you understand to what that is relative. If it's going to give you a lot of value for your nutrients, then go for it. If not, though, then don't waste your time, as it's not worth the investment.

- **Fill your cart with a good blend of healthy foods:**

Always opt for fresh foods, but then supplement with an appropriate blend of frozen and canned goods. No matter what, just be sure that you are always prepared and well-stocked to cook good healthy meals and snacks. After all, that's what going to the grocery store is all about.

Grocery shopping is truly an important activity for your weight loss efforts. If you want to ensure that you stick to your guidelines and make the right choices, then follow our tips. You can stick to the plan and surprise yourself with how good the right foods taste and how much better you feel as a result. It does take practice and it may mean more sacrifices and time invested initially, but you will thank yourself in the end. This is a big part of your weight loss journey, and so embrace how the right food shopping can influence and help your overall goals. Good luck and prosperous shopping!

Now that you learned “Food Shopping the Proper Way,” here you will find a list of food items that are recommended according to the Trim Down Club Program, and should be added to your weekly shopping list.

In this list, we tried to combine the best foods that are most beneficial for losing weight and maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Breads and Crackers

- 100% whole grain bread
- Rice crackers
- Rye crackers (crispbreads)
- Spelt bread
- SWG (sprouted whole grain) bread
- SWG (sprouted whole grain) English Muffin
- SWG (sprouted whole grain) roll
- SWG (sprouted whole grain) tortillas
- Whole rice bread

Grains, Cereals, and Legumes

- Amaranth
- Brown rice
- Brown rice pasta
- Granola, organic, raw
- Kamut
- Lentils
- Millet
- Oats, raw or organic
- Quinoa
- Red beans
- Rice cereal, 100% whole grain
- Corn cereal, 100% whole grain
- SWG (sprouted whole grain) cereal

Milk

- Cow’s milk, organic, grass-fed, fortified
- Almond milk, calcium/vitamin-fortified, lower fat
- Spelt milk, calcium/vitamin-fortified
- Oat milk, calcium/vitamin-fortified
- Rice milk, calcium/vitamin-fortified
- Hazelnut milk, calcium/vitamin-fortified

- Hemp milk, calcium/vitamin-fortified
- Coconut milk, calcium/vitamin-fortified

Dairy and Related Products

- Eggs (omega-3, organic, grass-fed, or free-range)
- Butter or ghee (clarified butter)
- Cheese, string or block, low-fat
- Cottage cheese, organic or grass-fed
- Cottage cheese, 0-1% milk fat
- Cream cheese
- Goat cheese
- Greek yogurt
- Plain Yogurt
- Ricotta cheese, 0-2% milk fat
- Sour cream

Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

- Apple
- Apricots (in season)
- Artichoke
- Asparagus
- Avocado
- Banana
- Berries, fresh or organic dried
- Bok choy, fresh
- Boysenberries, fresh, or dried organic berries
- Broccoli, fresh
- Carrots
- Cauliflower
- Celery
- Corn
- Cucumber
- Figs, fresh or organic dried
- Grapes
- Greens, for cooking (i.e. mustard, turnip, beet)
- Jerusalem artichokes
- Lemons
- Lettuce
- Melon – honeydew, cantaloupe or other melon in season
- Mushrooms
- Nectarine, fresh, or other fruit in season
- Okra
- Oranges

- Peaches
- Persimmons
- Potatoes, fresh
- Radishes
- Spinach, fresh
- Tangerines
- Tomatoes
- Zucchini

Meat & Poultry

- Beef, extra-lean, grass-fed
- Steak, lean grass-fed
- Ground beef, 85% lean grass-fed
- Chicken breast, organic
- Chicken, organic (dark/light)
- Cornish hen, grass-fed
- Turkey, organic (dark/light)
- Turkey bacon, natural
- Turkey sausage, natural
- Turkey, free-range (dark/light)
- Pork, extra-lean
- Lamb, lean
- Game, lean

Fish

- Ahi Tuna Steak
- Bass (Freshwater)
- Bass (Sea)
- Catfish
- Clams
- Cod
- Crabmeat
- Crayfish
- Flounder
- Grouper
- Haddock
- Halibut
- Herring
- Lobster Meat
- Mackerel
- Mahi Mahi
- Mussels
- Octopus

- Perch (Freshwater)
- Perch (Ocean)
- Rockfish
- Roughy
- Salmon (organic – preferred)
- Sardines
- Scallops
- Shark
- Shrimp
- Snapper
- Sole
- Squid
- Swordfish
- Tilapia
- Trout
- Tuna (Dark)
- Tuna (White)
- Whitefish

Spreads, Seasonings, and Oils

- Almond oil
- Chia seed oil
- Flax seed oil
- Hazelnut oil
- High-oleic sunflower oil
- Coconut oil
- Macadamia nut oil
- Olive oil, extra virgin
- Nut butter, organic
- Seasonings (herbs and spices)
- Jam/marmalade (100% fruit)
- Apricot butter
- Hummus
- Tahini, from whole sesame seeds and canola or olive oil

Meat Substitutes

- Natto
- Seitan
- Soy beans, fermented
- Edamame
- Tempeh

Nuts, Seeds, and Dried Fruit

- Almonds
- Brazil nuts
- Cashews
- Currants, fresh or organic dried
- Filberts or hazelnuts
- Hickory nuts
- Peanuts, organic
- Pecans
- Pine nuts
- Raisins, organic
- Sunflower seeds
- Walnuts (organic – preferred)

And much, much more!

*Go to the **Menu Planner** in the online tools section of the website, and plan your meal.*

We recommend starting the program by adding some of the items in the Menu Planner lists that you want to try or already like to your next shopping list to try. Take advantage of the “Generate Grocery List” function to the right of your menu.

After trying the various foods, **keep the ones you love** and **eliminate the ones that will not work for you**.

After several shopping cycles, you will have your own new and healthy shopping list that will fit you best.