Two dozen hints on how to spend less for groceries and eat more healthfully.

1. **Plan ahead.** Make and use a shopping list. Plan what you’ll cook, what you’ll need, and how many meals you can get from one dish.

2. **Buy according to UNIT PRICE** on the shelf tag. It should show the price as cost/oz or cost/lb. The UNIT PRICE shows which costs less for the real food in the package.

3. **Compare store and national brand prices** and nutrition labels. Even with a coupon for the national brand, store brands are often less expensive, and just as healthy.

4. **Only use coupons for what’s on your list,** or what you are sure you will use soon.

5. **Compare prices on ‘specials’ vs. regular brands.** Often specials are no savings. The ends of the aisles are not always good buys.

6. **Buy and eat more beans, peas and lentils,** and less meat. Have a vegetarian day once a week.

7. **Decide how much your time is worth** and whether you can afford to buy peeled carrots at $5 a pound, or peel them yourself for $.99/lb.

8. **Put more whole grains, fruits and vegetables** and less meat on your plate.

9. **Buy canned or frozen fruits and vegetables,** especially when they are not in season. Only buy fresh produce when it’s in season. Be sure to get the reduced sugar and no salt added packages.

10. **Buy the largest packages** that you can store and use on basic foods that don’t spoil rapidly, such as cereal or flour. You usually spend less on packaging that way. (See #2)
11. **Buy meats in larger packages**, then divide into meal or serving sizes at home. Package and freeze for future use.

12. **Buy concentrated frozen juices** instead of ready-to-drink. They usually cost less.

13. **Buy small packages or individual serving sizes** of things you don’t need or tend to eat too much of, such as ice cream.

14. **Carry your lunch** instead of buying out every day. Make enough for the week on Sunday and freeze each day’s meal.

15. **Roast a turkey, turkey breast, ham or roast beef**, then slice it thinly and freezer for sandwiches. It will cost less and have less salt than prepackaged lunch or deli meats.

16. **Buy the package that has the least amount of packaging**. You’ll get more food and less plastic for your money.

17. **Make your own snacks** to take to work. Divide large bags of chips or carrots into baggies. You can make healthier snacks and use less packaging than the vending machine.

18. **Drink more water and milk** and less soda. Get a small thermos for milk, coffee, tea or water.

19. **Buy only as much fresh produce as you can use** before it spoils, just enough for 2-3 days.

20. **Buy plain fat-free yogurt** and add your own sugar or sweetener, or better yet add applesauce or mashed fruit.

21. **Buy plain rice or potatoes** instead of mixes and add your own herbs and spices.

22. **Try to shop just once a week**, and not when you’re hungry. There’s less temptation to buy more.

23. **Shop when you have time** to read the labels and compare prices.

24. **Check for ‘Use by’ or ‘Best if used by’ dates** on meats, seafood, and packaged dry goods. Most canned goods will be good for years.