

Top Tips for Feeding Your Child on a Low Budget

Providing healthy nutritious meals for your child (ren) on a tight budget can be a challenge for everyone. This information gives some top tips to help you to do this. It covers;

- ✓ the kinds of foods you could include in your shopping basket
- ✓ managing your food budget to make it stretch further
- ✓ low-cost meals suggestions for breakfast and lunch
- ✓ cooking on a low budget
- ✓ useful websites and apps to help you
- ✓ local support for those self-isolating or shielding because of coronavirus (covid-19)



Ideas for Breakfast

It might be tempting to cut breakfast out of the day, especially if you are trying to save money. However, this is not a good idea, whatever your budget. Breakfast is a very important meal for everyone. Here are some low-cost healthy breakfast ideas to try;

Breakfast Ideas	
Simple cooking required	Super easy to prepare
☺ Soft boiled egg and bread	☺ Cereal and milk (ideally Ready Brek, Weetabix (or supermarket own brands) or porridge)
☺ Scrambled egg on toast	☺ Fresh, frozen or canned fruit
☺ Toast and spread/butter	☺ Low sugar yogurt
☺ Mini pancake with fruit, or mushrooms and tomatoes	☺ 125mls of fresh orange juice
☺ Poached eggs on toast	☺ Glass of milk

Always carefully check ingredients when choosing breakfast cereals and yogurts, as they can be full of hidden sugar. Try to stick with cereals like Weetabix, Ready Brek or porridge as they contain a lot less sugar than chocolate coated cereals. Download the free Change4Life **Food Scanner app** onto your mobile phone, to check how much sugar is contained in the foods you are buying. It will help you make some simple sugar swaps.



Change4Life also has plenty of [low cost breakfast ideas and recipes](#) to try on its website.



Ideas for Lunch

When at school, a hot two-course lunch is provided each day for children who take a school meal. At home, you may prefer instead to have a hot meal only once a day and a cold meal for lunch or dinner instead. Whatever you decide, here are some ideas of the kind of low-cost foods and drinks you could include in your shopping basket to help you provide nutritious meals for your child(ren).

Children are given a good variety of meals at school, so if you can, try to give them as many different meals as you can during the week. Try to avoid buying lots of luxuries like sweets, cakes, biscuits and fizzy drinks. This will help to make your budget stretch further and help your child(ren) have healthier teeth and be a healthy weight.

Shopping List Ideas  	
<input type="checkbox"/> Bread, tortilla wraps, flatbread	<input type="checkbox"/> Butter or margarine/spread
<input type="checkbox"/> Fresh, tinned or frozen fruit and vegetables such as potatoes, onions, carrots, turnip, broccoli, tomatoes, cucumber, lettuce, apples, pears, oranges, bananas	<input type="checkbox"/> Pasta (dry or fresh) <input type="checkbox"/> Fresh stuffed or filled pasta
<input type="checkbox"/> Eggs	<input type="checkbox"/> Cheese
<input type="checkbox"/> Tinned tomatoes, baked beans, soup, pasta mixes (or try making your own)	<input type="checkbox"/> Rice
<input type="checkbox"/> Noodles	<input type="checkbox"/> Ham or other slices meats or soya products (fresh or tinned)
<input type="checkbox"/> Corned beef	<input type="checkbox"/> Tinned fish such as tuna
<input type="checkbox"/> Milk	<input type="checkbox"/> Yogurt (try to buy low sugar yogurt)
<input type="checkbox"/> Lentils	<input type="checkbox"/> Beans such as kidney or butter beans
<input type="checkbox"/> Minced meat (beef, turkey, pork or chicken) or minced tofu or soya	<input type="checkbox"/> Tofu or soya
<input type="checkbox"/> Beef burgers	<input type="checkbox"/> Custard
<input type="checkbox"/> Fish fingers	<input type="checkbox"/> Fresh orange juice
<input type="checkbox"/> Tin of rice pudding	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't forget to add your breakfast foods to the shopping list!

These are just a few ideas of foods to get you started. There are many more.

Some examples of nutritious low-cost meals that you could serve are given on the next couple of pages.



Budgeting

Remember: it is often a lot cheaper to cook meals from scratch yourself than buying ready-made or take away meals. For example:

- ◆ A homemade cheese, tomato and ham sandwich using 2 slices of wholemeal bread **costs 48p**, but the same sandwich in a supermarket would cost £2.30, **saving you £1.82**.
- ◆ You could make your own 'meal deal'; with the same type of sandwich, an apple and a drink of cold tap water for only **68p per person**. A similar meal deal in a supermarket would cost £3.00. You would **save £2.30** per person by making your own.
- ◆ Scrambled egg on toast **costs only 22p per serving**.
- ◆ A homemade cottage pie made with minced beef and served with cooked mixed frozen vegetables **costs 50p per serving**. A supermarket own brand equivalent ready meal, served with cooked mixed frozen vegetables, costs £1.24 per serving. You would **save 74p per person** by making your own.
- ◆ A hot baked potato served with a small tin of tuna fish costs 98p per serving. You can lower the cost even more if you replace the tuna fish with baked beans. That would **cost only 26p per person**.

Savoury Main Course Lunch Ideas	
☺ Cheese on toast	☺ Corned beef hash (warm corned beef mixed with hot mashed potato)
☺ Scrambled egg on toast	☺ Fish fingers
☺ Pasta and tomato sauce perhaps with other vegetables, cheese or meat or tofu of your choice	☺ Vegetable curry and rice
☺ Baked potato with a filling like cheese, baked beans or tuna fish	☺ Sausages and mash with vegetables
☺ Chilli con carne and rice – minced meat or meat free e.g. vegetable chilli con carne	☺ Omelette
☺ Pizza and salad	☺ Cottage pie – with minced meat or meat free
☺ Salad e.g. pasta salad, rice salad, egg salad, ham salad, tuna salad	☺ Meat balls and pasta
☺ Fish and chips (try to limit chips to once or twice a week)	☺ Burger and salad or vegetables

Savoury Main Course Lunch Ideas	
☺ Baked beans on toast	☺ Humous and vegetable sticks with pitta bread
☺ Sandwich or wrap containing some protein such as; meat, cheese, egg, tuna fish, tofu, humous and vegetables	☺ Minced meat or soya mince, cooked with onions and tomato paste and pepper, served with boiled or mashed potatoes and fresh/tinned or cooked frozen vegetables
☺ Soft boiled egg and bread	☺ Hot soup and bread
☺ Spaghetti bolognese (meat or vegetarian)	☺ Sausage and bean casserole
Dessert (Pudding) Ideas	
☺ Fresh or tinned fruit salad	☺ Banana and hot custard
☺ Fruit crumble for example; apple crumble and custard	☺ Peach melba – tinned peaches and ice cream
☺ A piece of fresh fruit or some canned fruit with juice	☺ Baked apple
☺ Yogurt	☺ A plain biscuit (not chocolate coated)
☺ Rice pudding (fresh or tinned)	☺ Mini crepe Suzette (pancakes) filled with fruit

There are many more meal ideas too, but the list gives you a few ideas.



Not sure how to cook?

There are many recipes and videos online which show you how to make a variety of low-cost tasty meals. Two of the best are;

BBC: Cooking on a Budget

This gives lots of [recipes with step-by-step videos](#) for those cooking on a tight budget. Just use the search bar at the top of the page to find recipes and videos for making nutritious low-cost meals such as, [scrambled eggs](#).

Change4Life Recipes

This website and free app has lots of [recipes](#), which are grouped into meals during the day such as; breakfast, lunch, dinner, puddings, snacks. Instructions are given on how to make each recipe, how long it will take and how difficult each is.

The Change4Life App is free from the App store/Google Play store.



Other Tips

- **Write** a shopping list before you shop and don't be tempted to buy foods you do not really need. 'Buy one get one free' deals are not a bargain if you do not need them in the first place!
- **Plan** your meals for the week ahead so that your children get a good variety of foods.
- **Many foods will stay fresh for longer if stored correctly.** Tinned and packet foods should have a 'best before' date stamped on them. Some fresh fruit and vegetables such as; potatoes need to be stored in a cool dark place, whilst others like tomatoes and lettuce should be kept in the bottom of the fridge. They may have a 'use by' date on them which you should follow. A loaf of bread should stay fresh for 2 days, but even longer if you freeze it and then defrost only the number of slices you need each day.
- **Don't waste anything.** 'Use by' dates are the date by which foods should be eaten, but 'best before' dates are the date when foods are at their best. This does not mean they cannot be eaten after that date, just that they may not be as tasty.
- **Use any leftover meals** the next day, making sure you store them in a fridge overnight. If reheating foods, make sure they are piping hot before serving. Do not reheat cooked food more than once.
- **If you have a freezer**, it is good to know that many foods and meals can be frozen instead of throwing them out. This includes for example; fresh milk, cheese, cooked meals, raw and cooked meat and fish, many vegetables and fruits, bread. Search online if you are not sure if the food can be frozen or not.
- **Try to freeze leftovers** to use at another time if you have a freezer. Make sure you label and date the food being frozen, so you know what it is and how long it has been in the freezer. Many foods can be safely frozen for months. Thaw thoroughly before using.
- **Buy cheaper supermarket own label brands** – the food often tastes the same as the more expensive brands.
- **Reduce the portion sizes served.** A child's stomach is about the size of their fist. This is the size of portion that children should be eating. Do not be tempted to give them an adult size portion, but stick to a '[Me Size](#)' meal instead. If it helps, try to serve children's meals on a smaller size plate.
- **Try to limit the number of take away meals** you have. They are often expensive, less nutritious and served in very big portions.
- **Try and involve your child(ren) in cooking.** They are more likely to try something new if they helped to make it. Cooking is a great way of learning something new. You and they, can even learn a language when you cook together by downloading the free [Linguacuisine app](#), viewing the [website](#) or using Facebook.

- Visit [Information Now](#) for up to date information about [free and low-cost food](#) and [meals](#) provided across Newcastle.

Support: What to do if you or your family are self-isolating or shielding*

If you or a family member that you live with, are in self-isolation or shielding* because of coronavirus and cannot get to the shops to buy food please;

- Ask a **trusted** friend, family member or neighbour, who is not self-isolating or shielding to shop for you. Make sure you give them a list of what you want them to buy. Ask them to give you the receipt with the shopping they bought for you. **Always** keep at least 2metres or 6 steps away from this trusted person and **do not** let them into your home whilst you are self-isolating or shielding. Make sure you wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with hot water and soap before and after touching your shopping. Remind your trusted person to also wash their hands thoroughly too.
- If you do not have a **trusted person** to buy food shopping for you, Newcastle City Council have set up a **free service** called [CityLife Line](#) which may be able to help you.

Telephone: **0191 2778000**

If you contact CityLife Line you will be asked some questions to see what kind of support, you need. If it is agreed that you need support, then it will be provided.

It is important that you DO NOT give any money or gift cards or vouchers to anyone you do not know or trust.

Never share your bank or credit card details with anyone.

 **If you have any questions about free school meals', please contact your child's school.**



View the top tips in our [short film](#) (You need to use Chrome, Microsoft Edge, Firefox or other supported browsers to view the film)

* Shielding is for those people who are 'extremely vulnerable' and have had a letter from the government and/or your GP to stay inside for 12 weeks.

Information produced by the Public Health Team, Newcastle City Council.

Prices quoted correct in April 2020.