

28 Healthy Foods That Are Incredibly Cheap

Eating healthy on a tight budget can be challenging. Many nutrient-dense foods are quite expensive, which is why some people opt for cheap junk foods instead. However, there are plenty of affordable foods you can purchase that are healthy and easy to add to your diet.

This article takes a look at 28 cheap, nutritious foods and their health benefits.

1–9: Vegetables

1. Broccoli

Broccoli is a cheap vegetable and it provides many vitamins and minerals that you need.

It's particularly rich in vitamin C, which acts as an antioxidant and may boost your immune system. Just one cup provides 135% of your daily needs. Additionally, it's rich in vitamin K and folate, both of which play a role in blood clotting and preventing certain neural tube birth defects. Studies show that the nutrients and antioxidants in broccoli may help prevent chronic illnesses such as cancer and heart disease. You can enjoy broccoli raw or cooked. It's often added to salads, casseroles and soups.

2. Onions

Onions are a popular vegetable with many health benefits, and they tend to be fairly low in price.

They are well known for being rich in certain antioxidants that may protect against allergic reactions, inflammation, arthritis, cardiovascular disorders, and certain types of cancer. Additionally, onions provide small amounts of several nutrients, including vitamin C, manganese, vitamin B6 and potassium. A small portion of onions can go a long way, and their versatility and flavour make them a great addition to any dish.

3. Bagged spinach

Bagged spinach is quite healthy and almost always reasonably priced. Spinach is rich in vitamin K, which plays an important role in bone health and reducing the risk of heart disease and cancer.

Also, spinach provides immune-boosting vitamin A, vitamin C, folate and manganese. A 2021 study found that consumption of spinach lowered the risk of non-alcoholic fatty liver disease. Like other leafy, green vegetables, spinach also contains beneficial plant compounds. They have the ability to reduce inflammation and prevent cell damage, which helps prevent chronic diseases. Incorporating spinach into your diet is simple. You can add it to salads, casseroles and soups. It can also be blended into smoothies for a nutrient boost.

4. Potatoes

Potatoes are an excellent source of nutrients and typically available for a reasonable price. Potatoes provide significant amounts of vitamins C, B6, and other nutrients. They also contain fibre, which supports digestion and appetite control.

Additionally, potato skins are rich in minerals, especially potassium. In fact, a medium-sized russet potato contains nearly twice the amount of potassium found in a banana. There are several ways to add potatoes to your diet. They taste great baked or boiled and make a fantastic side dish.

5. Sweet potatoes

Sweet potatoes are extremely healthy and one of the cheapest vegetables you can buy and they provide an impressive amount of vitamins and minerals that have many health benefits. They are particularly high in beta-carotene, which is converted into vitamin A in the body. Just one sweet potato provides 369% of your daily need for vitamin A, which plays an important role in eye health.

Sweet potatoes also contain a decent amount of B vitamins, vitamin C, potassium and fibre. Studies show they may have anti-inflammatory effects, which help lower the risk of chronic diseases such as cancer and diabetes. You can pair sweet potatoes with just about any dish, and they are quite easy to prepare by steaming, baking or roasting.

6. Canned tomatoes

Tomatoes are the most frequently consumed canned vegetable world-wide. They are very nutritious and relatively affordable.

What really makes tomatoes shine is their vitamin C content. A one-cup serving contains an impressive 37% of your daily needs. They also provide some B vitamins, vitamins A, E and K and many trace minerals. Studies have shown that eating tomatoes may help reduce “bad” LDL cholesterol and blood pressure levels, two primary risk factors for heart disease. What’s more, they may protect against certain types of cancer.

Many of their health benefits are attributed to their lycopene content. Lycopene is an antioxidant that may reduce inflammation, protect cells from damage and lower the risk of disease. Canned tomatoes are a handy staple to have in your kitchen. They can easily be added to soups, casseroles and stews.

7. Carrots

If your budget is tight, carrots are a cheap and nutrient-dense vegetable to include in your diet.

Carrots are one of the richest sources of beta-carotene, which is responsible for their impressive vitamin A content. Just one cup of carrots provides 119% of your daily needs for vitamin A, which promotes good eyesight and immune health.

Furthermore, carrots contain a significant amount of fibre, vitamin C, vitamin K, potassium and manganese. Due to their high antioxidant content, eating carrots regularly may help decrease inflammation and reduce the risk of stomach cancer. You can reap the health benefits of carrots by enjoying them raw or cooked. They make an excellent addition to salads and cooked dishes.

8. Green cabbage

Green cabbage is a perfect budget-friendly vegetable. High amounts of vitamin C are found in green cabbage, in addition to some B vitamins and trace minerals. Cabbage and other cruciferous vegetables are unique because of their glucosinolate content. Glucosinolates are antioxidants that have been studied for their ability to protect against certain types of cancer.

Some studies have also found that cabbage consumption may lead to a significant reduction in the risk of heart disease and type 2 diabetes. A versatile vegetable, cabbage is easy to add to your diet. It’s commonly enjoyed in salads and coleslaw, or can be fermented and made into sauerkraut.

9. Butternut squash

Butternut squash is a nutrient-dense option to include in your diet, and it’s quite affordable. Compared to other winter squash varieties, butternut squash provides a higher amount of nutrients.

In fact, one cup contains 127% of the DV for vitamin A, 34% for vitamin C, 12% for potassium and 14% for magnesium.

Moreover, it's an especially rich source of soluble fibre and antioxidants, which provide many health benefits, including weight control and a reduced risk of heart disease (43Trusted Source, 44Trusted Source, 45Trusted Source).

There are several different ways to enjoy butternut squash. It tastes great on its own, but it's often consumed as a side dish.

10–16: Grains and legumes

10. Brown rice

Brown rice is a fantastic, cheap food that provides fibre, vitamins and minerals. It consists mostly of carbs, with 3.23 grams of fibre per cup (202 grams) and a decent amount of B vitamins, magnesium, phosphorus and manganese. The health benefits of brown rice include reducing the risk of type 2 diabetes and heart disease, as well as promoting weight control. Including brown rice in your diet is simple. It is quite easy to prepare and can be enjoyed with just about any meal.

11. Oatmeal

Oatmeal is another nutrient-dense whole grain.

It contains an impressive amount of nutrients, including B vitamins, iron, manganese, phosphorus, zinc and magnesium. Additionally, it's rich in fibre with 4 grams per cup (240 grams). Fibre promotes fullness and may help lower cholesterol and blood sugar levels. The combination of fibre, vitamins and minerals in oatmeal may have the potential to reduce the risk of several diseases, including type 2 diabetes, heart disease and obesity. In general, oats are enjoyed as a breakfast food. You can combine them with fruit, milk, yogurt and several other ingredients for a healthy and delicious meal.

12. Canned beans

Canned beans are budget friendly, in addition to being very nutritious. Beans contain a significant amount of fibre and a variety of vitamins and minerals, including folate, iron, magnesium and potassium. Furthermore, they are an excellent source of plant-based protein. There are 14.5 grams of protein in a cup (240 grams) of black beans. Protein is beneficial for weight maintenance and muscle strength.

Consuming beans and other legumes is also associated with a reduced risk of heart disease and diabetes. This is likely due to their ability to lower cholesterol and promote blood sugar control. Beans can be incorporated into just about any dish. They are commonly added to soups, salads and burritos.

13. Dried Lentils

On average, dried lentils are fairly affordable and quite healthy.

A cup (198 grams) of lentils provides a significant amount of nutrients, including 90% of your daily need for folate, 37% for iron, 55% for copper and 43% for manganese. They also contain an impressive amount of protein and fibre, which is why they are so filling and helpful for weight control.

What's more, lentils contain antioxidants that protect cells from inflammation. This may reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as diabetes and cancer. Research also suggests that eating lentils is associated with improved blood pressure and cholesterol levels, which is important for preventing heart disease. The use of lentils is similar to that of beans, and there are several ways that they can be incorporated into the diet, such as in salads and soups.

14. Edamame

Edamame is a healthy food and it's an excellent high-fibre food and provides several nutrients, including vitamin K, folate and almost every trace mineral that your body needs. Moreover, it's another rich, plant-based source of protein, providing 22 grams in a one-cup (180-gram).

Studies show that edamame and other soy-based foods may help lower the risk of heart disease, osteoporosis and certain types of cancer. This is often attributed to their content of isoflavones, which function as antioxidants in the body. Most often, edamame is prepared as a steamed side dish. You can increase its flavour by adding seasonings of your choice.

15. Quinoa.

Quinoa is a complete source of protein, which means it provides all the essential amino acids your body needs. This sets it apart from other grains, which need to be paired with other foods to be considered complete protein sources. Also, quinoa contains antioxidants, fibre, B vitamins, vitamin E, iron, manganese, zinc and several other trace minerals, all of which protect your cells from damage that often leads to disease.

The health-promoting properties of quinoa have been shown to promote brain health and may help prevent the development of heart disease. Quinoa is also a great nutrient-dense grain that is safe for people with celiac disease. The use of quinoa in cooking is similar to that of rice. It's easy and quick to prepare and can be eaten alone or incorporated into salads and cooked dishes.

16. Air-popped popcorn

Popcorn makes a terrific snack food, especially because it is healthy and cheap.

It's very low in calories compared to other whole grains. With only 31 calories per cup (8 grams), you can eat a lot of it without gaining weight.

Furthermore, popcorn provides some filling fibre and disease-fighting antioxidants, as well as a fair amount of B vitamins and magnesium. To make air-popped popcorn, place one-fourth cup of popcorn kernels into a brown paper bag and heat it in the microwave until it stops popping. Add toppings of your choice, such as olive oil, sea salt or Parmesan cheese.

17–22: Fruits

17. Bananas

As one of the cheapest fruits around, bananas have a variety of health benefits.

They are full of some important vitamins and minerals, such as vitamin C, vitamin B6, potassium and manganese. Additionally, bananas provide a decent amount of fibre, which may benefit digestive health, promote weight loss and protect against diabetes. You can enjoy bananas as a quick snack food. They also taste great combined with peanut butter or yogurt.

18. Oranges

Oranges are very healthy and cheap.

They are prized for their vitamin C content. Just one orange provides 92% of your daily need for this immune-boosting vitamin. They also provide fibre, antioxidants and lots of other nutrients, including B vitamins, calcium and potassium. Consuming oranges and other fruits on a regular basis has been shown to reduce inflammation in the body, thus lowering the risk of several conditions, such as heart disease, diabetes and obesity. It is simple to add oranges to your diet. They are fairly convenient and can be enjoyed as a snack on their own or mixed with yogurt, salads and smoothies.

19. Frozen berries

Berries are nutrition superstars and reasonably priced when you purchase them frozen. Their incredible antioxidant content makes them one of the healthiest fruits you can eat. In fact, berries are considered to be one of the best sources of natural antioxidants.

The consumption of antioxidant-rich berries is linked to the prevention of some chronic diseases, such as heart disease, Alzheimer's disease and certain types of cancer. What's more, they are high in fibre and many nutrients, especially vitamin C, vitamin K and manganese. To reap the health benefits of berries, try to include them in your diet regularly. They make for a delicious snack or healthy dessert and can be added to smoothies and salads.

20. Apples

Apples are very healthy and generally cheap.

One medium apple contains two grams of fibre, which is mostly responsible for the positive effects that apples have been shown to have on serum cholesterol levels. Moreover, apples provide some vitamin C, B vitamins and trace minerals, as well as several antioxidants. Eating them regularly may help lower inflammation in the body, which is a major risk factor for several chronic diseases. They are an easy, convenient food to add to your diet and commonly consumed as a snack or chopped into a salad.

21. Cantaloupe

Cantaloupe is a nutrient-dense and affordable fruit.

One of its notable characteristics is its low-calorie content. There are only 53 calories in one cup of cantaloupe, making it a weight loss friendly food. It's abundant in some important nutrients, providing 41% of your daily need for vitamin A, 19% for vitamin C and 5% for potassium in a one-cup (160-gram) serving. Like other orange vegetables and fruits, cantaloupe contains the antioxidant beta-carotene, which has powerful health benefits such as cancer and heart disease prevention (96Trusted Source).

22. Kiwi

Kiwis have some powerful health benefits and come quite cheap.

A medium kiwi provides 83% of your daily need for vitamin C, which is a major reason why eating them appears to support immune function. They are also high in fibre, vitamin K, potassium and antioxidants, all of which work together to protect your cells from damage and reduce the risk of chronic disease. Kiwis may be particularly helpful for heart health, as eating them regularly has been shown to increase "good" HDL cholesterol, lower levels of fats in the blood and decrease blood pressure.

23–26: Fish and meat

23. Canned fish

Canned fish has many health benefits and is significantly cheaper than fresh seafood. Not only is fish a fantastic source of protein, it's also high in omega-3 fatty acids, which are important for brain health and reducing inflammation. Additionally, fish provides a decent amount of the trace mineral selenium, which may boost immune system health and protect against cancer. What's more, if you purchase canned fish with the bones included, you will get a healthy dose of vitamin D, calcium and phosphorus. You can pair canned fish with salads, sandwiches, crackers and avocado or use it in several dishes, such as seafood cakes and stir-fries.

24. Pork

Pork is quite cheap compared to other types of meat and it's one of the best sources of dietary protein. In only three ounces of ground pork, there are 22 grams of protein, in addition to a significant amount of B vitamins, phosphorus, zinc, iron and selenium. It's best to eat unprocessed pork that has been cooked properly.

25. Chicken breast

Chicken breast is an excellent healthy and protein-rich food to eat when you're on a budget. In half a chicken breast, there are 28 grams of high-quality protein, meaning that it contains all of the essential amino acids that your body needs. Chicken breast also contains high amounts of important vitamins and minerals, such as niacin, vitamin B6, phosphorus, magnesium and selenium. Including chicken breast in a healthy, balanced diet has been shown to help reduce the risk of obesity, heart disease and diabetes. It may also protect against the risk of cancer.

26–28: Dairy

26. Cottage cheese

A 16-ounce container of cottage cheese is typically affordable and a very healthy food to include in your diet. Cottage cheese is a great source of protein, providing 11.6 grams per 100 grams, which is about 23% of your daily need and may help appetite control and weight maintenance.

In addition, it contains a variety of other nutrients, including calcium and phosphorus, which are known for playing an important role in bone health. You can enjoy cottage cheese as a delicious snack. It tastes great when combined with fruit and is often added to salads.

27. Yogurt

Yogurt is nutritious & budget friendly. In only one cup (245 grams) of yogurt, there are 8.5 grams of protein and lots of B vitamins, in addition to 23% of your daily need for calcium, 19% for phosphorus and 13% for zinc. Furthermore, some yogurts are good sources of probiotics, which are healthy bacteria that may benefit digestive health. Yogurt tastes great when combined with fruit or nuts, or it can be added to smoothies. It can also be made into a sauce and combined with cooked dishes.

28. Milk

Milk is very healthy and affordable. One cup (249 grams) of whole milk provides a significant amount of protein, calcium, B vitamins and phosphorus. It's also typically fortified with vitamin D. Consuming

milk and other dairy products on a regular basis may help prevent several chronic diseases, including osteoporosis, heart disease, diabetes, dementia and certain cancers.