

Myth buster: It's more expensive to eat healthy

Many people believe that it costs more to eat healthy. But you can eat healthy with a phytonutrient-rich,* modified Mediterranean food plan without substantially increasing your food budget. You may even spend less on food than you do now.

We shopped local grocery stores and food chains to discover cost differences between a phytonutrient-rich meal plan compared to meal options commonly found in the standard American diet (SAD). Our efforts revealed patient savings in overall dollars and calories with the a phytonutrient-rich meal plan.

Phytonutrient-Rich vs. SAD: A Comparison

1-Day Sample Menu	Phytonutrient-Rich	SAD**
Breakfast	1 serving nutritional shake blended or shaken with ice and water 2 boiled or scrambled eggs	Cereal with 2% milk and sliced banana
Snack	4 oz. plain Greek yogurt with ½ cup cubed cantaloupe	Caffè mocha and blueberry muffin
Lunch	Chicken "burrito" bowl: chicken, black beans, brown rice, onions/bell peppers/zucchini sauteed in olive oil, lettuce, tomato, salsa, guacamole, hot sauce, and lime	Cheeseburger, french fries, chocolate shake
Snack	1 serving nutritional shake blended with water and frozen peaches ½ cup fresh baby carrots	Iced caramel latte blended and chocolate chip cookie
Dinner	Grilled salmon, steamed lentils, baked sweet potato with butter, grilled asparagus Green salad with tomato and olive oil/balsamic vinaigrette	Spaghetti with meat sauce, caesar salad, diet cola
Snack	Apple wedges with almond butter	None
Calories	1,805	4,309
Glycemic load (GL)***	45	326
Potential health effects	Reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease and overall mortality. ¹	Promotes inflammation and increases risk of certain chronic conditions. ²

*Phytonutrients are chemical compounds that contribute to the color, taste, and smell of plants and also offer protection from pests and stressors in the environment.¹ In humans, a phytonutrient-rich diet may provide anticancer, anti-inflammatory, and immune-supportive benefits.² Understanding what you put on your plate daily has tremendous impact on overall health and wellbeing.

**This sample menu may not be representative of all eating habits under the standard American Diet.

***The glycemic index (GI) is a food ranking system based on the rate at which the body converts a fixed serving of food into glucose. A high-GI food (typically sugary or more processed carbohydrates) triggers a spike in blood sugar, while a low-GI food will cause a small, gradual rise. The glycemic load (GL) not only takes the GI into account but also a typical (or recommended) portion size and fiber content. This is considered a more meaningful way of gauging the impact that different foods have on blood sugar levels. A GL of < 80 per day is considered optimal.

References:

1. Drewnowski A et al. Bitter taste, phytonutrients, and the consumer: a review. *Am J Clin Nutr.* 2000;72:1424–1435.
2. Minich DM. A review of the science of colorful, plant-based food and practical strategies for "eating the rainbow." *J Nutr Metab.* 2019.

Phytonutrient-rich vs. SAD: patient savings

Costs per serving for one person. Refer to Phyto-Power Grocery List for additional ideas.

1-Day Sample Menu	Phytonutrient-Rich	SAD		
Breakfast	1 serving nutritional shake	\$3.50	1½ cup popular brand breakfast cereal	\$0.75
	2 eggs	\$0.60	1 cup 2% milk	\$0.30
			1 sliced banana	\$0.75
Snack	4 oz. plain Greek yogurt	\$0.58	16 oz. caffè mocha, whole milk, no whipped cream	\$3.99
	½ cup cantaloupe	\$0.75	Blueberry muffin	\$3.25
Lunch	4 oz. chicken	\$2.33	Large cheeseburger	\$4.99
	½ cup black beans	\$0.60	Medium french fries	\$1.99
	⅓ cup brown rice	\$0.25	Small chocolate shake	\$2.49
	½ cup onions/bell peppers/zucchini (1 tsp. olive oil)	\$0.96		
	1 cup lettuce and tomato	\$0.75		
	¼ cup salsa	\$0.96		
	2 Tbsp. guacamole	\$0.90		
	1 tsp. hot sauce	\$0.02		
	Lime wedge	\$0.10		
Snack	1 serving nutritional shake	\$3.50	16 oz. blended caramel coffee beverage, no whipped cream	\$3.99
	½ cup frozen peaches	\$0.90	Chocolate chip cookie	\$1.95
	½ cup baby carrots	\$0.76		
Dinner	4 oz. salmon	\$3.43	2 cups cooked spaghetti noodles	\$1.00
	½ cup lentils	\$0.25	1 cup meat-flavored sauce	\$2.00
	½ medium sweet potato (1 tsp. butter)	\$0.49	1 cup romaine lettuce	\$0.75
	4 asparagus spears	\$1.75	4 Tbsp. croutons	\$1.26
	1 cup salad greens	\$0.55	2 Tbsp. dressing	\$0.35
	½ cup tomato slices	\$0.75	12 oz. diet soda	\$0.75
	1 tsp. each olive oil/balsamic vinegar	\$0.09		
Snack	½ small apple	\$0.34		
	1½ tsp. almond butter	\$0.25		
Cost		\$25.36		\$30.56

Food items were purchased in the Orange County, CA area. Actual costs (in US dollars) for single-serving portions may vary by location and season. Prices do not include applicable sales tax.