

+EAT WELL FOR LESS EVEN IF YOU DON'T HAVE TIME

By Dr. Mark Hyman

You don't need lots of time or money to be healthy! This is one of most common misconceptions. I understand the challenges of trying to **eat well with limited financial resources**, limited time, or both. But I promise you -- you don't have to be rich or retired to eat well and take care of yourself.

I know what it's like to live on very little. In college and medical school, I lived on \$300 a month (for rent, food, and entertainment). And in residency, I lived on \$27,000 a year while supporting a wife and two children. Even though that was 20 years ago, it still wasn't much for a family of four.

These days, I understand more than ever what it's like to have very little free time. My days are full, seeing patients, teaching other doctors, acting as Chairman of the **Institute for Functional Medicine**, working as editor of a medical journal, writing books (and blogs), giving lectures, being a volunteer for Partners in Health in Haiti, spending time with my friends and wife, being the father of four children who have their own busy lives, all while trying to fit in exercise and sleep, too.

All of this has given me the opportunity to learn many tricks for eating good-quality, healthy food that's prepared with little money and even less time. In this week's blog, I'll let you on some of my secrets for eating well cheaply and quickly.

But first, I'd like to share a recent email I received from a trucker who read my book, **UltraMetabolism**. He's someone with limited resources, limited time, and limited access to good quality food. He certainly got me laughing -- and hopefully will get some of you thinking about obstacles that may not be so big after all.

A TRUCKER EDUCATES US ABOUT NUTRITION

Dear Mark,

I thought I'd let you know that the things I learned from your book are really working well for me. I drive a truck for a living and get almost no exercise. At 5'11", I weighed 324 pounds two months ago, making me heavier than 7'2" Shaquille O'Neal! I started eating as you suggest and now, I am down 40 pounds with no effort at all.

No hunger, no craving, no forcing myself, no starving, no rigid do's and don'ts -- Just choosing good stuff to eat. I started drinking lots of water with fresh squeezed lemon juice added and eating a big breakfast with frequent snacks of fruit, vegetables, and nuts and seeds and then not eating 3 to 4 hours before bedtime.

The weight melts off like magic. I am dead serious. NO EFFORT, NO HUNGER. My body is getting what it needs so it has no need to scream out at me to feed it as if I were starving. I got my life back. God bless you.

If I can do as well as I do living and eating in a truck, out on the road with a sedentary lifestyle, imagine what a person who lives in a house with a kitchen and regular access to markets where healthy food is available can do!

This is just common sense stuff but it appears as a miracle to one such as I who was lured in to every weight loss trap known to humankind! Atkins, Weight Watchers, Diet Center, Starvation and the Gym, Fen-Phen, blablabla ad nauseum.

If a knot-headed, parachute-tester type redneck hick from hicktown like me can do this and win, anyone can.

Sincerely,

Alan from Elko

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Alan's story is a powerful example of how a little creativity and a lot of determination can overcome some common obstacles to good health.

If you want to have similar success, don't just let life roll along unconsciously and lead you into a future that may not be what you want for yourself! Instead, I encourage you to take a critical look at how you invest your time and money -- and then make some choices about how you spend them. Here is specifically what I recommend.

STEPS TOWARD A HEALTHIER LIFE AND DIET

First, for just one week, keep a journal of every cent you spend and how you spend every hour of the day. How much money do you spend on coffee, gum, sodas, convenience foods, or even cigarettes? How much do you spend eating at restaurants or on fast food or take out?

Think about how you spend your days. Do you waste time reading tabloids, watching TV, surfing the Internet, playing video games, or doing too many errands because you don't plan your time well?

Then, ask yourself if you want to be spending your time doing what you are doing now and if you are spending your money the way you really want. Think of money as your life energy. It represents your time in physical form. How do you want to spend this life energy?

There is no right or wrong answer. It's just something to think about. You just might discover that you have more time and money than you think to invest in yourself -- and in the quality of life and health that you deserve.

Once you've thought about your answers to these questions, choose three things to change that can give you more time or money. For example, don't buy that \$2 coffee every day -- that's \$730 a year! Or give up watching just a half hour of some inane reality TV show a day -- that's an extra 7.6 days a year! These aren't hard choices.

We are all overworked, stressed, and over taxed! Even so, there are ways of making choices that work within our resources.

Now that I've got you thinking, let me reveal a few secrets of eating well on the cheap -- and on the fly.

1. Healthy food doesn't have to cost more. Research has shown that eating healthy, whole, real food isn't necessarily more expensive than eating junk food, fast food, processed foods, or convenience foods. (i), (ii) In fact, the top four things purchased in supermarkets are ALL drugs: sugar, caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol! If you give up those "drugs," your grocery bill will go down dramatically.

2. Healthy food isn't hard to find. You don't have to shop in a gourmet food store, a health-food store, or farmer's market or eat only organic to eat well. There are plenty of healthy foods right in your local supermarket. Just shop around the outside aisles of the store.

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3. Healthy food doesn't take lots of time to prepare. You don't have to spend hours cooking complex meals to eat well. Good quality, fresh food is easy to prepare and enjoy once you learn how.

Now that you're in on those secrets, you're ready to start eating well! Here are a few ideas based on how I save time and money AND create better health for myself.

- **Search out cheaper sources of fresh, whole foods in your neighborhood.** My top choices are stores like Trader Joe's and shopping clubs like Costco or Sam's Club, where you can buy vegetables, fruits, nuts, canned beans, sardines, and salmon at much lower costs than regular supermarkets or other retail chains.
- **Think about joining your local food co-op.** Co-ops are community-based organizations that support local farmers and businesses and allow you to order foods and products in bulk at just slightly over the wholesale price. This takes a bit of advance planning but will save you money.
- **Develop repertoire of a few cheap, easy-to-prepare meals.** Have the ingredients available at home at all times so you don't get stuck eating food that doesn't make you feel well or help you create the health you want. This takes a bit of advance planning but is well worth it. Here are a few of my favorite quick, easy snacks and meals.

Almond Butter on Whole-grain Rye Bread with Fruit Spread

Take a slice of rye bread, add a bit of almond butter, and top it with sliced fruit for a delicious snack. You can even dip bananas or apple slices right in the tub of almond butter -- which is cheaper to buy in bulk at a food co-op.

Hummus with Celery Sticks or Carrots

In just five minutes, you can take chickpeas (canned or cooked yourself in advance), sesame paste, lemon juice, water, garlic, cumin powder, salt, and pepper, mix them in a food processor, and have fresh hummus on your table. It lasts a week in the fridge -- and is a great source of protein, fiber, essential oils, calcium, minerals, and vitamins. Want to save even more time? You can also buy hummus already made.

Sardines in Lemon Juice

These fish are cheap and an excellent source of protein and the best source of omega-3 fats. Just open a can and squirt them with lemon juice. I keep a can in my office at all times in case of emergency -- and sometimes give them to my patients instead of drug samples! Yes, I know what you are thinking "sardines, gross!", but just give it a try, you might be surprised.

My Favorite 5-minute Dinner

I keep a large container of cooked brown rice -- which you can make in advance or at night while you are watching TV - in the fridge. I also keep greens -- like collards, kale, or spinach -- in the fridge. And I always have canned sardines or salmon in my cupboard. These foods mix together to make a great 5-minute dinner for those nights when I'm just too tired -- or too lazy - to make anything else!

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Here's the recipe:

1. Heat about 1/2 to 1 cup of the pre-cooked brown rice in a pan with a little olive oil. If I'm really, really lazy, I heat it up in the microwave. Put the rice in a bowl.
2. To the same pan, add 1 tablespoon of olive oil and some crushed garlic, which you can buy by the jar. Heat for 1 minute, until the pan is warm but not smoking.
3. Add the spinach or chopped greens, which just need a quick rinse beforehand. Add salt and pepper and stir. Cook just until the greens begin to wilt; about 3 to 5 minutes.
4. Put the greens in a big bowl on top of the rice, and top with a can of sardines or salmon.
5. Season with hot sauce -- and enjoy!

Want more quick and easy ideas to manage your time and health? Check out the [recipes section](#) of the new drhyman.com. I just renovated my website, and I'd like to invite all of you to come have a look. Included are many healthy, whole-foods recipes from *The UltraMetabolism Cookbook* that you can make quickly on busy week nights when you don't have the time to prepare fancy meals.

Take a lesson from Alan whose story I shared above. If he can find a way to eat healthy, lose weight, and take care of his health while living in the cab of a truck without supermarkets or a kitchen, just imagine what you can do if you put your mind to it! It's the best way to achieve lifelong vibrant health.

References

- (i) Cutler D.M., Rosen A.B., and S. Vijan. 2006. The value of medical spending in the United States, 1960-2000. *N Engl J Med.* 355(9): 920–7.
- (ii) Raynor, H.A., Kilanowski, C.K., Esterli, I., et al. 2002. A cost-analysis of adopting a healthful diet in a family-based treatment program. *J Am Diet Assoc.* 102(5): 645–650, 655–656.