



Healthy Shopping at the Dollar Store

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Providing healthy eating strategies for our urban patients with diabetes has been a challenge. The food deserts commonly found in these areas serve as a roadblock for patients who are trying to make healthy choices.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
Breakfast	2 frozen waffles 2 tbsp peanut butter ¾ cup blueberries 3 CHO	1 packet instant sweetened oatmeal 1 cup NF milk 1 hardboiled egg 3 CHO	1 egg white 1 slice RF cheese 2 slices bread ½ cup peaches 3 CHO
Lunch	½ can tuna 2 slices bread ½ cup applesauce 3 CHO	2 oz ham 1 slice cheese 2 slices bread ½ cup applesauce 3 cups RF popcorn 4 CHO	½ can chicken 2 slices bread 1 tbsp RF mayo ½ cup pepper medley 20 pretzel sticks 3 CHO
Dinner	3-4 oz. boneless LF ham steak 1 cup hash browns ½ 9-in plate broccoli 1 cup NF milk 3 CHO	3-4 oz chicken marsala 1 cup rice ½ 9-in plate spinach 3 CHO	Frozen chicken pot pie 1 cup frozen vegetables 3 CHO
Snack	3 peanut butter crackers 1 RF string cheese 1 CHO	3 peanut butter crackers 1 cup NF milk 2 CHO	Single serving pudding 1 CHO

Food deserts can be described as geographical areas where residents' access to affordable, healthy food options (especially fresh fruits and vegetables) is restricted or nonexistent due to the absence of grocery stores within convenient traveling distance. For instance, according to a report prepared for Congress by the Economic Research Service of the US Department of Agriculture, about 2.3 million people (or 2.2% of all US households) live more than 1 mile away from a supermarket and do not own a car.¹

Downturns in the economy often lead to a decline in the household income. The Dollar & Variety Stores industry has capitalized on the recession, with more consumers turning to these stores for deep discounts. In the next 5 years, these stores are expected to perform well by targeting low-income households and price-conscious customers.² Candy and paper goods led the sales in the channel, but many of the stores are starting to carry frozen foods, which affords an opportunity for patients to obtain healthy food choices.

We set out to create a diabetes meal plan with food found at the dollar store. We used *My Healthy Plate for Diabetes* as a guide for a more balanced approach and enhanced variety by choosing fresh, frozen, and packaged goods. This also enabled us to emphasize portion control with our patients as a way to positively impact weight management and blood sugar control. For \$39, we were able to purchase food for 2 people based on the meal plan

Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
2 frozen waffles 2 tbsp peanut butter ¾ cup blueberries 1 cup NF milk 4 CHO	Smoothie: ½ cup frozen blueberries ½ cup frozen peaches 1 cup NF milk Ice for texture 3 CHO	2 pieces toast 1 egg 1 egg white ½ cup spinach 1 slice cheese ¾ cup blueberries 3 CHO	2 tbsp peanut butter 2 slices bread ½ cup peaches 3 CHO
2 slices RF cheese ½ cup diced tomatoes 2 slices bread 20 pretzels sticks 3 CHO	2 tbsp peanut butter 2 slices bread Single serving pudding 3 CHO	Left-over day 3–4 CHO	½ can chicken 2 slices bread 1 tbsp RF mayo ½ cup applesauce 1 cup NF milk 4 CHO
1 cup rice ½ cup beans ½ 9-in plate mixed pepper medley 4 CHO	3-4 oz chicken marsala 1 cup hash browns 1 cup NF milk ½ 9-in plate spinach 3 CHO	½ frozen pizza ½ 9-in plate spinach 3 CHO	3-4 oz boneless rib eye steak 1 cup hash browns ½ 9-in plate broccoli ½ cup applesauce 3 CHO
3 cups RF popcorn 1 RF string cheese 1 CHO	Single serving pudding ¾ cup blueberries 2 CHO	3 peanut butter crackers 1 cup NF milk 2 CHO	½ cup peaches 1 RF string cheese 1 CHO



(see table). The store that we sampled accepted Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits as payment. This one shopping outing gave us confidence that we could direct patients to make healthy choices, even in food deserts.

Diabetes Meal Plan

Approximately 1800 kcals, 45-60 grams CHO per meal (reduced fat dairy emphasized).

It was noted that even with our combined expertise in diabetes and nutrition it was challenging to make the meal plan seamlessly healthy. Many things we picked up were highly processed and rich in sodium and fat. We currently work with individuals who live in a food desert, so our goal was to use the resources that were readily available in an effort to optimize their nutritional status and improve their overall health.

Dollar Store Shopping List for 2 People: \$39.00

- Low fat sugar free pudding (1 package; 6 servings)
- Peanut butter crackers (1 package; 6 single servings)
- Boneless ham steak 98% fat free (1 package)
- Nonfat milk (2 half gallons)
- Reduced fat popcorn (1 large bag)
- Low fat cheese (1 package)

- Frozen waffles (1 package)
- Frozen peaches (1 package)
- Frozen blueberries (1 package)
- String cheese (2 packages)
- Small frozen pizza (1 package)
- Low fat frozen chicken marsala (2 packages)
- Frozen pot pie (2 pies)
- Frozen broccoli (1 large bag)
- Frozen spinach (2 large bags)
- Frozen pepper medley (1 large bag)
- Frozen hash browns (1 large bag)
- Boneless rib eye steak (1 package)
- Whole wheat bread (2 loaves)
- Applesauce (1 package; 6 single servings)
- Italian dressing (for flavoring veggies)
- Black beans (1 can)
- Instant oatmeal (1 package; 6-8 single servings)
- Diced tomatoes (1 can)
- Tuna fish (1 can)
- Eggs (1 dozen)
- Low sodium canned chicken (2 cans)
- Peanut butter (1 container)
- Low fat mayo (1 container)
- Reduced fat deli ham (1 package)
- Rice (1 bag)
- Low fat pretzels (1 bag) ■

Pat DeHart, RN, and Joanna Hunter, RD, are employed by the Virtua Center for Nutrition and Diabetes Care in Camden, New Jersey.



REFERENCES

1. *Access to Affordable and Nutritious Food: Measuring and Understanding Food Deserts and their Consequences.* Washington, DC: US Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service; 2009.
2. IBIS World report NAICS 45299. <http://www.ibisworld.com/industry/default.aspx?indid=1093>. September 2013.