

BUDGET-FRIENDLY TIPS

BUDGET-FRIENDLY REDUCED CARBOHYDRATE DIET TIPS

Budget-Friendly Reduced Carbohydrate Diet Tips

We all know that sticking to a budget can sometimes feel like a daunting task, especially when it comes to maintaining a healthy diet. But eating well doesn't have to break the bank. With a little creativity and some strategic planning, you can enjoy nutritious meals without overspending. This guide is full of practical tips to help you make delicious, lower carbohydrate meals while keeping your costs down, so you can stay on track with your health goals without stretching your budget.



General Principles

Plan Your Meals and Shopping:

- **Meal Planning:** Plan your meals for the week to avoid impulse buys and ensure you only purchase what you need. This strategy helps you make efficient use of ingredients and prevents last-minute, costly takeaway options.
- **Shopping List:** Create a detailed shopping list based on your meal plan and stick to it. This list is your guide to avoid unnecessary purchases and stay focused on your dietary needs.
- **Inventory Check:** Regularly check your pantry and fridge to use existing ingredients and prevent food wastage. Utilising what you already have reduces the need for additional purchases and saves money.

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Buy in Bulk:

- **Stock up on staples:** Purchase bulk quantities of reduced carbohydrate staples like nuts, seeds, oils, and certain vegetables. Bulk buying often provides a discount, making it a cost-effective option for non-perishable and freezable items. Proper storage ensures these items remain fresh and available for longer periods, reducing frequent trips to the store.
- **Buy expensive items when on sale:** Some items like avocados can be extremely expensive at certain times of the year – these can be bought in bulk when cheap and the flesh will keep well in the freezer.

Shop Smart:

- **Seasonal Produce:** Purchase seasonal vegetables and fruits, as they are often cheaper and fresher than out-of-season produce. Seasonal items are typically more abundant and travel shorter distances, reducing costs and supporting local agriculture.
- **Shop at Cheaper Places:** Think about which supermarkets offer the best deals and compare prices. In addition to supermarkets, visit farmers' markets, ethnic stores, and greengrocers for fresh and affordable produce. Buying from local markets can often be cheaper and fresher.
- **Frozen Options:** Choose frozen vegetables and fruits like broccoli, cauliflower, and berries, which are often cheaper than fresh and have a longer shelf life. Frozen produce is typically picked at peak ripeness and frozen immediately, preserving its nutritional value.



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- **Sales and Discounts:** Look out for sales, use coupons, and take advantage of loyalty programmes to reduce costs. Regularly check store flyers, apps, and websites for discounts on your favourite lower carbohydrate foods, and stock up when prices are low.
- **Consider Substitutions:** Be flexible with your recipes. If an ingredient is too pricey, look for a more affordable, reduced carbohydrate substitute. Here are some examples:
 - **Sour Cream to Greek Yogurt:** Substitute sour cream with Greek yogurt. It provides a similar texture and added protein at a lower cost.
 - **Kale to Spinach:** Replace expensive kale with spinach. Spinach is also nutrient-dense, low in carbs, and versatile for use in salads, smoothies, and cooked dishes.
 - **Capsicum (Peppers) to Cucumber:** Use cucumber instead of capsicum if bell peppers are too costly. Cucumber is great for salads, dips, and as a crunchy snack.
 - **Organic to Regular Produce:** While organic produce may be optimal when budgets allow, it is perfectly fine to buy regular produce to save money. The nutritional benefits of eating more vegetables outweigh the benefits of organic options when budget is a concern.



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Cook Efficiently

Batch Cooking and Leftovers:

- **Cook Large Quantities:** Prepare large portions of meals that can be frozen and reheated. This method saves time and money by reducing the frequency of cooking sessions and minimising the need for expensive takeaway options.
- **Freezer-Friendly Recipes:** Focus on dishes that freeze well, such as soups, stews, casseroles, and chilli. Properly label and date each portion to keep track of what you have in your freezer.
- **Meal Prep Sessions:** Set aside a day each week for meal prep. Cooking multiple meals at once can make the rest of the week easier, ensuring you always have healthy, reduced carbohydrate options on hand.
- **Use Leftovers:** Cook extra portions and use leftovers for future meals to save time and money. Freeze surplus portions to ensure you have ready-made meals available.
- **Revamp leftovers:** Take last night's grilled chicken and create a delicious chicken salad by mixing in mayo, celery, and a sprinkle of paprika, or add eggs to leftover veggies to make a frittata or omelette for a speedy meal. '



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Simple, Nutritious Meals:

- **Basic Ingredients:** Use basic, budget-friendly ingredients like proteins (chicken, eggs, tofu), non-starchy vegetables (broccoli, cauliflower, courgette), and healthy fats (olive oil, butter, avocados). These ingredients are versatile and can be used in various recipes.
- **Quick Recipes:** Focus on recipes that are quick and easy to prepare, reducing the time spent in the kitchen. Stir-fries, salads, omelettes, and sheet pan meals are great examples of simple, reduced carb dishes.
- **Flavourful Additions:** Enhance the taste of your meals with herbs, spices, and simple sauces. Ingredients like garlic, ginger, lemon, and fresh herbs can elevate the flavour without adding significant cost.
- **Efficient Use of Ingredients:** Plan meals that use overlapping ingredients to maximise their use and minimise waste. For example, a roasted chicken can be used in salads, soups, and stir-fries throughout the week.
- **Balanced Meals:** Focus on meals with a good balance of protein, non-starchy vegetables, and healthy fats. Use spices and herbs to add variety and flavour to your dishes.

Avoid Processed Foods:

- Skip expensive packaged 'keto-friendly' foods and snacks. Instead, prioritise whole foods and reserve processed items as occasional treats.



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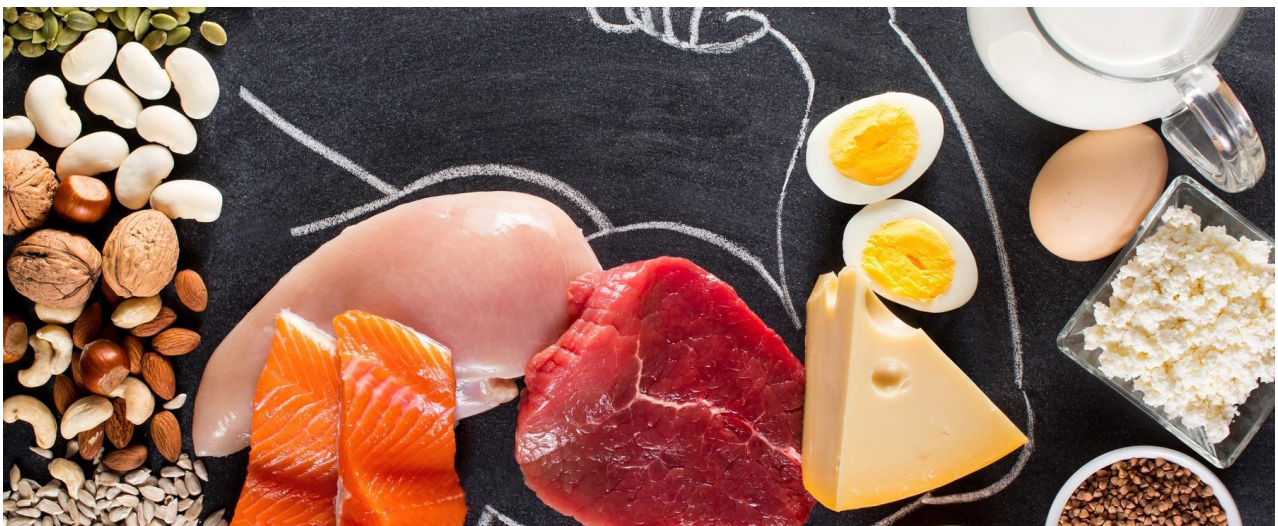
Incorporate Healthy Fats:

- Adding healthy fats like avocado, seeds, nuts, cheese, fatty fish and olive oil (as examples) to your meals can help keep you fuller for longer, reducing the need for snacks.

Cost-Effective Protein Sources

Affordable Meats:

- **Cheap cuts:** Buy cheaper cuts of meat such as pork, beef sirloin, ground chuck, and chicken thighs.
- **Purchase whole chickens:** Utilise all parts then freeze leftovers for future use.
- **High fat meats:** Opt for fatty cuts which are often cheaper and suitable for reduced carbohydrate diets.
- **Organ meats:** Incorporate organ meats like liver, which are inexpensive and nutrient dense. If you don't like eating liver on its own, try dicing it finely and mixing it into a dish like chilli to bulk up the ground beef.



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Alternative Proteins:

- **Pulses:** While beans and legumes can be more challenging to incorporate into a very low carbohydrate diet (i.e., the ketogenic diet) due to their higher carbohydrate content, they are great budget options for a reduced carbohydrate diet.
 - **Plant-based proteins:** Tofu and tempeh can be budget-friendly and versatile alternatives.
 - **Eggs:** eggs are a versatile and affordable source of protein that can be used in various dishes.
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Grow your own

- **Growing your own vegetables, and herbs** can significantly reduce grocery expenses, as home-grown produce is often cheaper than store-bought. Although there may be initial set-up costs for seeds, soil, and gardening tools, the long-term gains include ongoing savings and a steady supply of fresh, cost-effective produce. Additionally, it allows you to harvest only what you need, minimising food waste and saving money in the long run.
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Avoid Snacking:

- **Reduce or Eliminate Snacking:** Snacks can add up in cost and often contribute unnecessary calories. Focus on eating nutrient-dense meals that keep you fuller for longer, reducing the need for snacks. Preparing balanced meals with adequate protein, healthy fats, and fibre can help manage hunger and prevent the urge to snack between meals.
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Drink Smart:

- **Avoid Expensive Drinks:** Specialty coffees, bottled water, and other store-bought beverages can be costly. Make coffee at home using a French press or drip coffee maker and add full-fat cream or a dash of cinnamon for flavour. Drink tap water or make homemade flavoured water by adding a slice of lemon, cucumber, or a few mint leaves. This not only saves money but also reduces waste from single-use bottles and cups.
 - **Invest in a SodaStream:** For those who enjoy sparkling water, buying a SodaStream can be much cheaper in the long run compared to purchasing bottled sparkling water. It also significantly reduces plastic waste, making it an eco-friendly choice.
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Intermittent Fasting:

- **Consider Intermittent Fasting:** Intermittent fasting can help naturally reduce meal frequency, leading to lower food costs. A popular method and a good place to start is using the 5:2 approach, which means eating normally for 5 days of the week and skipping a meal (like breakfast) on two days of the week (and not making up for it food wise for the remainder of the day). Always consult a healthcare provider before starting a fasting regimen.
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Avoid Temptation:

- **Shop the Perimeter of the Grocery Store:** The outer edges of the grocery store typically contain fresh produce, meats, dairy, and other whole foods, while the inner aisles are filled with processed and packaged items. By shopping the perimeter, you can focus on healthier, whole food options and avoid the temptation of processed snacks and sweets.
- **Consider Online Grocery Shopping:** Online shopping can help you avoid impulse buys and stick to your shopping list. It allows you to compare prices easily, take advantage of online-only discounts, and see your running total before checkout, helping you stay within budget. Additionally, shopping online can save time and reduce the stress of in-store shopping.

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DIY (Do It Yourself):

Making your own food items at home can significantly reduce costs and allow you to customise your meals to suit your tastes. Many of these methods are often quick and easy, saving you money and providing fresh, healthy options. Here are some examples of DIY food preparation that can save you money:

- **Make Cauliflower Rice:** Buying cauliflower rice pre-made can be expensive. Instead, make it yourself in bulk by grating or processing fresh cauliflower. This is cheaper, easy, and allows you to control the portion sizes.
- **Prepare Your Own Nut Butters:** Store-bought nut butters can be pricey. Making your own at home with a food processor can save money and let you customise flavours and textures. It's a quick process that can be done in minutes.
- **Homemade Snacks:** Prepare snacks like kale chips, roasted nuts, or cheese crisps at home. These are often cheaper, healthier, and can be made quickly compared to store-bought versions.
- **DIY Sauces and Dressings:** Making your own sauces and dressings from basic ingredients can be more cost-effective and healthier than buying pre-made options. Try making vinaigrettes, mayonnaise, and marinades at home. These can often be whipped up in a matter of minutes.