

February 19, 2009

Nutritious Food Basket in Toronto

The Nutritious Food Basket (NFB) is Ontario's standardized food costing tool that measures the basic cost of healthy eating in each Board of Health jurisdiction. Toronto Public Health is required to annually conduct the NFB costing survey using a guideline prepared by the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, *Monitoring the Cost of a Nutritious Food Basket Protocol*. This protocol requires that 66 specified foods be priced in at least six different grocery stores. The NFB includes basic food items from all food groups in Canada's Food Guide. The foods included in the survey are based on nutrition recommendations and Canadian purchasing patterns. During the costing, the lowest available price is recorded for each food item in each of the grocery stores. It is important to note:

- The NFB does not include processed and prepared foods, snack foods and restaurant or take-out foods. It excludes essential non-food items such as laundry detergent, soap and other personal care products.
- It assumes most people have the necessary time, food skills and equipment to prepare meals from relatively low-cost food staples and ingredients; it also assumes access to many grocery stores.

In 2008, the cost of the NFB increased 2.4% from a year earlier, and 9.4% since 2006. Over nine years, the total increase has been 27%, compared to an inflation rate of 21%. Taking account of drastic cuts to social assistance rates in 1995, the purchasing power of people on social assistance has been reduced by 40% since 1993.

Impact on Health

- Because of the high cost of housing and inadequate income, many Toronto residents are forced to choose between paying the rent and buying food and other necessities.
- After paying the rent, people living on low and/or fixed incomes do not have enough money left over for nutritious food and other basic needs.
- Individuals from low income households are more likely to report poor health and multiple chronic conditions, including major depression, heart disease, diabetes and high blood pressure.

Food and Shelter on a Social Assistance Household Budget

September 2008	One Person Household, Ontario Works <small>(single male age 25-49)</small>	Single Parent Household with 2 children, Ontario Works <small>(female age 25-49, boy age 13, girl age 7)</small>	Reference Family of Four, Ontario Works <small>(male and female age 25-49, boy age 13, girl age 7)</small>	One Person Household, Ontario Disability Support Program <small>(single male age 25-49)</small>
Financial Benefit ¹	\$560.00	\$967.00	\$1,084.00	\$999.00
Additional Benefits/Credits ²	\$20.00	\$698.00	\$698.00	\$27.00
Total monthly income	\$580.00	\$1,665.00	\$1,782.00	\$1,026.00
Cost of Shelter <small>(Average Monthly Rent)</small>	\$742.00 <small>(Bachelor)</small>	\$1,072.00 <small>(2 Bdr.)</small>	\$1,275.00 <small>(3 Bdr.)</small>	\$742.00 <small>(Bachelor)</small>
Cost of Food <small>(Based on Toronto NFB 2008)</small>	\$205.00	\$432.00	\$590.00	\$205.00
What's left for other basic needs? (e.g. household and personal care items, clothing etc.)	-\$367.00	\$161.00	-\$83.00	\$79.00

¹No financial benefit other than OW or ODSP. ²Additional benefits/credits include Federal/Provincial child benefits and GST credit, (where applicable). For more information and details on the above calculations please visit www.toronto.ca/health (click on 'N' for Nutritious Food Basket in the A-Z index).

Weekly Cost of the Nutritious Food Basket in Toronto (May 2008)

Visit our website at www.toronto.ca

How to Calculate the Food Costs of a Nutritious Food Basket *

Follow the steps below to find out the cost of a weekly nutritious food basket.

STEP 1:

Write down the age and sex of all the people you are feeding.
For example:

Man, 37 years old and Woman, 37 years old
Boy, 13 years old and Girl, 7 years old

STEP 2:

Write down the cost of feeding each person.

STEP 3:

This is your subtotal.

STEP 4:

It costs a little more to feed a small group of people and less to feed a large group. Use the following adjustments for household size:

1 person – multiply by 1.15	4 people – make no change
2 people – multiply by 1.10	5 people – multiply by 0.95
3 people – multiply by 1.05	6+ people – multiply by 0.90

STEP 5:

To determine the cost per month, multiply by 4.33

Age/Sex/Group

Child	1	16.13
	2-3	17.12
	4-6	22.71
Boy	7-9	26.97
	10-12	33.51
	13-15	39.11
	16-18	45.33
Girl	7-9	25.81
	10-12	30.85
	13-15	32.90
	16-18	31.03
Man	19-24	42.68
	25-49	41.21
	50-74	37.23
	75+	33.80
Woman	19-24	31.68
	25-49	30.15
	50-74	29.54
	75+	28.76

Pregnancy

Age	13-15	
Trimester 1		36.38
Trimesters 2,3		38.46
Lactation		39.67
Age	16-18	
Trimester 1		36.09
Trimesters 2,3		38.94
Lactation		40.03

Sex	Age (years)	Cost Per Week (\$)	Example
Man	37	41.21	
Woman	37	30.15	
Boy	13	39.11	
Girl	7	25.81	
Subtotal		\$136.28	
TOTAL		\$136.28 x no adjustment = \$136.28 x 4.33= \$590.09/month	

Example: Reference Family of 4, Toronto (May, 2008)

Sex	Age (years)	Cost Per Week (\$)	Your Household
Subtotal			
TOTAL			

Age	19-24	
Trimester 1		35.26
Trimesters 2,3		37.70
Lactation		38.67
Age	25-49	
Trimester 1		33.75
Trimesters 2,3		35.88
Lactation		36.67

* The cost of the Nutritious Food Basket is based on the 66 food items collected from 12 stores across the City. The software program automatically adds 5% to the basket cost to cover the cost of miscellaneous foods used in meal preparation, e.g., spices, seasonings, condiments, baking supplies, coffee/tea.