

The Cost of the Nutritious Food Basket in Toronto - 2002



What is the Nutritious Food Basket?

The nutritious food basket is a food costing tool that measures the cost of healthy eating based on recommendations set by *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating (1992)* and *Nutrition Recommendations (1990)*.

The Nutritious Food Basket is a list of foods that can be priced to estimate the average cost of feeding 23 different age/sex groups (refer to Table 1).

The selection of foods included in the Nutritious Food Basket is based on nutrient value. The foods are among those frequently purchased. The food items are chosen according to the **lowest available price** in several different grocery stores.

The Food Basket

The Food Basket includes 66 basic food items from the four food groups of Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating. These basic food items can be changed to meet personal food preferences, e.g., bok choy, kale or collards can replace broccoli; vegetarians may choose fortified soy beverage in place of milk or cheese.

The Nutritious Food Basket:

- is economical because it includes **basic food** items and generally does not include processed foods, snack foods and restaurant/take-out foods

- is based on the assumption that people have the necessary food skills to be able to prepare most meals from scratch
- can be used by any age and ethnic group or income level
- excludes non-food items such as laundry detergent, soap and paper products

How is the Nutritious Food Basket Calculated?

As outlined by the Ontario Ministry of Health (MoH), Toronto Public Health staff use a formula to determine the cost of the Nutritious Food Basket based on the 66 food items collected from 12 stores across the City. These steps need to be followed in order to calculate the Nutritious Food Basket.

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|--------|---|
| STEP 1 | Select the stores to survey |
| STEP 2 | Train Public Health staff to conduct the surveys |
| STEP 3 | Conduct the in-store pricing |
| STEP 4 | Calculate the cost of all food items surveyed, using the MoH's software program |

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.

Nutritious Food Basket Pricing Results for Toronto

Household Size	Nutritious Food Basket Pricing Results -2002
Family of four: two parents, boy 13 years, girl 8 years	\$121.00/week \$523.93/month
Single male, 35 years	\$ 37.23/week, \$185.38/month
Widowed female, 70 years	\$ 26.48/week, \$131.86/month
Mother, 24 years with child, 2 years	\$ 43.03/week, \$204.95/month

- The results from June 2002 indicate that food costs have increased by about 3% since the June 2001 survey.
- Since 1999, food prices have increased by more than 13%; the majority of this increase was reflected in the June 2001 survey.



Table #1: Weekly Cost of the Nutritious Food Basket in Toronto (June,2002)

Sex	Age (years)	Cost Per Week (\$)
Child	1	14.07
	2-3	14.75
	4-6	19.44
Boy	7-9	23.38
	10-12	29.15
	13-15	34.27
	16-18	40.14
Girl	7-9	22.60
	10-12	26.78
	13-15	28.66
	16-18	27.51
Man	19-24	38.24
	25-49	37.23
	50-74	33.77
	75+	30.41

Woman	19-24	28.28	
	25-49	26.90	
	50-74	26.48	
	75+	25.81	
Pregnancy	Trimester 1	13-15	31.60
	Trimesters 2,3		33.29
	Lactation		34.14
Trimester 1	16-18	31.84	
	Trimesters 2,3	34.00	
	Lactation	34.80	
Trimester 1	19-24	30.92	
	Trimesters 2,3	32.85	
	Lactation	33.54	
Trimester 1	25-49	29.68	
	Trimesters 2,3	31.46	
	Lactation	32.04	

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. Use Table # 1 to complete calculations for your family or group. Table #2 shows an example of how much it will cost a family of four. Use Table #3 to complete calculations for another household.

STEP 1: Write down the age and sex of all the people you are feeding.

For example: Man, 40 years old
 Woman, 38 years old
 Boy, 13 years old
 Girl, 8 years old



STEP 2: Using Table #1, 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
- 2 people - multiply by 1.10
- 3 people - multiply by 1.05
- 4 people - make no change
- 5 people - multiply by 0.95
- 6+ people - multiply by 0.90

STEP 5: To determine the cost per month, multiply by 4.33

Table #2 Example: Reference Family of 4, Toronto (June, 2002)

Sex	Age (years)	Cost Per Week (\$)
Man	40	37.23
Woman	38	26.90
Boy	13	34.27
Girl	8	22.60
<i>Subtotal =</i>		121.00
TOTAL		121.00 x no adjustment = 121.00 x 4.33 = 523.93/month

Table #3 Your Household

Sex	Age (years)	Cost Per Week (\$)
<i>Subtotal =</i>		
TOTAL		_____ x ___ adjustment = _____ x 4.33= _____ /month

How to Use the Nutritious Food Basket Information

- Acts as an effective tool to raise awareness about the cost of healthy eating
- Provides information that can be used to promote and support policy development to increase access to healthy foods
- Helps an individual, family or group estimate the cost of healthy eating
- Helps to compare the cost of healthy eating to other basic living expenses, such as housing/shelter, transportation, clothing and child care in relation to income
- Serves as an educational tool to teach budgeting in family studies courses and home management programs

Mixed Bean Salad

- 1 can (19 oz/540 mL) kidney beans, drained
- 1 can (19 oz/540 mL) chick peas, drained
- 1 can (14 oz/398 mL) green beans, drained
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 medium green pepper, chopped (optional)
- 2/3 cup vinegar 150 mL
- 1/3 cup vegetable oil 75 mL
- 1/4 cup sugar 50 mL
- salt and pepper

1. Put kidney beans, chick peas, green beans, onion and green pepper into a large bowl.
2. Mix vinegar, oil, and sugar in a small bowl. Pour over bean mixture. Mix well.
3. Add salt and pepper to taste. Cover and refrigerate.
4. Stir gently before serving.

Cost: \$0.26 per serving



This is a favourite any time of the year! Enjoy!
Serves 12 (1/2 cup/125mL per serving)

For more information, contact:
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