

Plant-Based Grocery Shopping Tips

Eating more plant-based foods, such as vegetables, fruits, whole grains and beans, is recommended for cancer prevention and survivorship.

October 22, 2024 By American Institute for Cancer Research and Anne Danahy

Key Takeaways:

- Eating more plant-based foods, such as vegetables, fruits, whole grains and beans, is recommended for cancer prevention and survivorship.
- Foods such as vegetables, fruits, nuts, seeds, beans and whole grains should be on your shopping list and in your grocery cart.
- Steer clear of grocery store marketing tactics that make you spend more in store, such as impulse buys at checkout counters and enticing products sold at eye level.

Plant-based eating is a powerful ally for cancer prevention and survivorship. Research shows that plant foods are rich in cancer-fighting compounds.

If you're new to plant-based eating, the idea of making the switch might seem daunting. The American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR) can help! Your first step is to stock your fridge and pantry with staple foods for a plant-based diet. Here's your guide to plant-based grocery shopping.

What Is a Plant-Based Diet?

Plant-based foods include vegetables, fruits, grains, nuts, seeds and beans (like chickpeas, black beans and kidney beans). But a plant-based diet is more flexible than you might think. It can also include some animal-based foods, such as poultry, eggs, dairy and fish. Limited amounts of red meat can fit, too. The key lies in the proportions.

AICR's New American Plate suggests filling at least two-thirds of your plate with plant foods, and the remaining one-third can be plant or animal-based protein-rich foods.

Head to the Supermarket

A Rainbow of Produce: Start in the produce section for vegetables and fruits. Choose leafy greens, berries, cruciferous vegetables like broccoli and cabbage, and orange fruits and vegetables like winter squash, carrots and cantaloupe. Frozen options are as healthy as fresh.

Whole Grains: Choose fiber-rich whole grains such as:

- Whole grain wheat: Also called spelt, bulgur, wheatberries, farro and emmer
- Oats
- Barley
- Millet
- Quinoa
- Brown, red, purple, black or wild rice

You can also choose bread, noodles and crackers that are made from any of these whole grains.

Plant Proteins: Buy beans and lentils, which offer protein, fiber, vitamins and minerals. Dried and canned beans are economical. Soy foods such as tofu, tempeh and edamame are also excellent choices.

Nuts and Seeds: Choose an assortment of nuts, nut butters and seeds for their healthy fats, protein and cancer-fighting compounds. Enjoy a handful of almonds, walnuts and cashews, or any mix of nuts and seeds daily.

Animal Proteins: A plant-based diet can also include some animal-based proteins. Fish, seafood and poultry are good choices. You can also stock up on milk, eggs and yogurt.

Best Beverages: Water, tea and coffee are top choices. Cut back on sugar-sweetened drinks. [Try these](#) fun sugar-free hot and cold drinks recommended by dietitians.

Choose Carefully: Not every plant food promotes health. Some choices are high in sodium, unhealthy fats and added refined starches or sugars. Check labels rather than assuming that something is healthy just because it's a plant-based food.

Grocery Store Marketing Tricks

Grocery store layout is a science! Beware of these five marketing tactics that make you spend more:

- Products sold at eye-level are prime real estate that manufacturers pay extra for, and you will, too. Look above or below for lower-priced items and store brands instead.
- Items at the checkout are impulse buys. Candy bars and soda won't be as tempting if you shop after a meal and aren't very hungry.
- Milk is on most grocery lists, so stores place it as far from the entrance as possible. That way, you walk through the whole store to get it and will likely pick up more items (and spend more money). Make a shopping list and stick to it.
- Sales that are not a real value. You may find two-for-one or multi-buy deals, which aren't a deal if you only need one item or will waste the other. Look at individual prices and compare before you buy.
- Specials and big displays may be promotional deals between the brand and the grocery chain, but may not mean the product has a sale price.

Anne Danahy, MS, RDN is a freelance health content writer and registered dietitian specializing in chronic disease prevention and management and healthy aging.

[This article](#) was originally posted September 27, 2024, by the [American Institute for Cancer Research](#). It is republished with permission.