

Be a savvy supermarket shopper

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(HealthDay)—Depending on how you navigate the aisles, your local supermarket can be an obstacle course of temptations or a direct route to eating healthy.

Start by carefully writing a detailed [shopping list](#) before you go, the experts at Nutrition.gov suggest. Planning out meals in advance can keep you focused on essentials. That means less chance of browsing through packaged-[food](#) sections and falling to temptation. Write out all the ingredients you need for home-cooked meals by food group to streamline your trip around the store.

In general, the healthiest foods are found around the perimeter of most markets. That's where you'll find low-fat dairy, lean meat and seafood, and fruits and vegetables—these should make up the core of your [shopping](#).

Then head to the grain aisle to look for whole grains, from whole-wheat pasta to brown rice and more unusual choices to try, like amaranth and spelt. Add a few varieties of dried beans or low- or no-sodium-added canned varieties to your cart.

Resist the urge to go down aisles filled with foods you're trying to avoid—sodas, candy and snacks. In general, minimize the amount of packaged foods you buy. But when you do need an item like crackers or breakfast cereal, always compare labels and choose the one with the least sugar, fat and salt.

If your store has a bakery, look for whole-grain breads or rolls. If you haven't made the switch yet from processed white breads, buying freshly made whole-grain baked goods can make the transition easier. But breeze right past the cakes and cookies.

End your trip in the frozen food section if you're shopping for fruits and vegetables that are out of season. Again, look for brands without added ingredients, especially sugar and salt.

It's OK to make grocery shopping fun. Visit farmers' markets for fresh

produce and specialty stores for locally made goods. But don't forget to read the labels there, too. That delicious farm-made jelly could be loaded with unwanted sugar.

More information: The American Heart Association has a detailed online grocery guide called [Simple Cooking With Heart](#) that's loaded with tips for healthy shopping.

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