

## The Recession Diet by Mike DeCinti

I can understand that for a lot of people right now there are much larger issues being dealt with than eating right and exercising. Whatever you might call this “economic state” we are in it makes sense that, for some, the issues of their jobs, their homes and their livelihood take precedent over their wellness. But during an economic slump people’s health is at risk, particularly their diets. History shows candy consumption goes up and newer reports reveal people eat more fast food and less fruits and veggies when money is tight. However it’s important to resist the temptation. Eat your fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds and beans, exercise more, eat lots of fresh simple foods at home, avoid smoking, and find healthy activities to reduce stress.

Here are a few tips that might help you get or stay on track and make sure that we don’t let an economic slowdown, affect our health and wellness. And if some of these things sound simple or familiar, it’s probably because (depending on your age) you heard your parents or grandparents talk about these same tips when they were dealing with the Great Depression.

- One of the first things you can do is simply cut back. During times when you need to cut your expenses, eating the right portions of food can be very convenient. If you and your family need to lose weight, reducing your food intake will save you money, and you can start by cutting out all the junk food.
- Ditch all the brand name items you buy, because nationally recognized brands are almost always more expensive than generic store brands. There’s usually a small difference in taste but with the money you’re saving, you’ll get used to it. The reason why brand named items are more expensive is because those manufacturers need to spend more money on marketing and advertising to get you to buy their product.
- You need fruits and vegetables in your diet, but in tough times, it’s very easy to cut them out. Many people think they’re too expensive. However, this is only true if you buy fruits and vegetables that are currently out of season and therefore need to be imported. Fruits and vegetables that are in season are sometimes ridiculously cheap. The price drops even more if you buy your fruit and vegetables from the markets instead of at the supermarket. So make sure you take advantage of our local Agricultural Farmers Market. Also, frozen vegetables are very cheap. They are just as nutritious as fresh vegetables and are ideal for people who find they waste more vegetables than they eat.
- Or better yet, grow your own. If you have a patch of dirt in the backyard or a balcony you can put pots on, then grow your own vegetables. Seeds are extremely cheap and a small vegetable patch actually takes up less room than most people think. Look at what vegetables you eat the most of and try growing them.

- Take advantage of sales and stock up. When a non-perishable or freezable item goes on sale, buy more than you intend to use so you can take advantage of the low price. Now don't buy extra just so you can indulge more, buy extra so you don't have to pay more when the sale ends. Do your research. Look at weekly advertisements to see which items will go on sale at each store.
- Learn to cook and eat at home. A recession gives you the perfect opportunity to learn how to cook. You'll save money while being healthy. You can cook up a healthy meal for a fraction of the price then you would pay getting take-out, and you will know exactly what's in your meal. Eating out or buying ready to eat meals is very convenient but expensive and unhealthy. These foods are heavily processed, contain a lot of preservatives and are high in sodium, saturated fat and sugar. And fast food may sound cheap but it is actually a waste of money, since you can make a healthier meal at home for less money.

However the great thing about the advise above, which again your parents or grandparents will tell you, is that you shouldn't wait for things to get tough before trying a few of these. It is sound advice that when followed, along with a regular exercise plan, can help anyone at anytime not only save money but stay healthy.

Mike DeCinti is the marketing director for Lumberton Radiological Associates. He can be reached at [mdecinti@lraxray.com](mailto:mdecinti@lraxray.com) or by calling 738-8222, Ext. 258.