



6 Tips for a Healthy Grocery Cart



#1: Plan Ahead: It's always best to go to the grocery store with a grocery list in hand. It will save time in the long run when you don't have to make multiple trips to the store during the week. The next step is to purchase only the items on your list, unless you remember an essential item, what I call a "staple" grocery item, such as bread, eggs, bananas, broccoli, etc.

#2: Never Go Hungry: Expecting yourself to stick to a grocery list and only buy the items on your "staples list" when your stomach is growling, is a set-up-to-fail. Impulse buying is what the grocery store, food companies and probably your kids are hoping you'll do, but it won't result in a healthy grocery cart.

#3: Shop for Real Foods: You've probably heard it's healthier to shop the perimeter of the grocery store. This is true and the reason is most of the processed foods are located in the middle aisles—chips, cookies, snack foods, frozen dinners, ice cream-- are all in the center of the store. The unprocessed, real foods, such as milk, eggs, fruits, vegetables and protein foods (meats, poultry, fish) are usually on the perimeter (outer walls of the grocery store). This is true for "healthy stores" too, such as Trader Joe's and Whole Foods.

#4: Less is More: When buying packaged foods, look for foods with short ingredient lists. A good rule of thumb is 5 ingredients or less. For example, purchase frozen fruits and vegetables that list only the produce in the bag with no added sweeteners or preservatives (except ascorbic acid, which is vitamin C).

#5: Watch the Sodium in Snacks: Tip #4 is important for snacks because many contain artificial flavors and colors, along with a lot of sodium. Look for snacks with 250mg sodium or less.

#6: Watch the Cereal Hype—I don't think there's another food more heavily marketed than cereals! It costs a few cents to make cereal, yet we pay \$4 to \$5 per box because of marketing and advertising. Don't trust what's written on the front of the box: "Made with Whole Grains" doesn't mean anything. Cereals often have a very small amount of whole grains with lots of white flour and sugar. The only way to know if it's really a whole grain is to read the ingredient list and check the fiber.

For more information about understanding food labels, avoiding marketing hype and getting your child to eat healthy foods, check out the [400 Moms](http://www.400Moms.com) Book at www.400Moms.com

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