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Maximizing Your Dollars Spent on Protein
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It is no secret that protein foods are an important part of a healthy diet. Proteins function as building blocks for bones, muscles, cartilage, skin, and blood. They are also building blocks for enzymes, hormones, and vitamins. A variety of foods are high in proteins- eggs, meat, poultry, fish, beans and nuts. Varying your protein food choices can provide your body with a range of nutrients designed to keep your body functioning well. Meats, such as beef and pork, can be important high quality protein components of your weekly meal plan. Since meat is often the most expensive part of the meal, filling up on meat can challenge your food budget. Here some tips to think about when planning your protein choices for the week:

The amount to buy for your family depends on the amount of bone or fat.

- One pound serves four if it has no bones or fat (ground beef, stew meat, cubed steak, boneless ham, fish fillets, lunch meats).
- One pound serves three if it has some bone and fat (pork chops, chuck roast, picnic ham, turkey parts, bone-in fish).
- One pound serves two when it has many bones or more fat (whole chickens and turkeys, spare ribs, ham hocks).
- Choose a mixture of protein foods from plant and animal sources. Eggs, peanut butter, and beans are less expensive than many meat sources but still high quality protein.
- Check store ads to see what meats are on sale or look into buying meat in bulk from a local rancher to save money per pound.
- Both canned and dried beans are healthy sources of protein that are low in fat and high in fiber and other nutrients.
- Dried beans are less expensive but take more planning to use, as they must first be soaked.
- Canned beans have more sodium. If you’re concerned about sodium but like the convenience of using canned beans, you can drain and rinse the beans to remove about forty percent of the sodium.
- Mix meat with beans, lentils, rice, pasta, or vegetables in your dishes.
- Use beans or a mixture of beans and ground beef or turkey in tacos.
- When making stir-fry, use more vegetables than meat.
- Add dry rice, bread crumbs, or oatmeal to meatballs or meatloaf.

Source: https://spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu/shop/aisle-by-aisle/proteins/ For more information on nutrition, food safety, health, or family and child development contact the Marais des Cygnes Extension District, or write to fmeastwo@ksu.edu or check out our website: www.maraisdescygnes.k-state.edu