

The Cost of Healthy Eating in Renfrew County – June 2007

The Nutritious Food Basket

The cost of an adequate amount of nutritious groceries was estimated in June 2007 by Community Food Advisors and staff at the Renfrew County and District Health Unit. They chose seven grocery stores from across Renfrew County, and priced Ontario's Nutritious Food Basket (NFB) in each store.

The NFB is a list of foods that can be priced to estimate the cost of healthy eating for a week. The list is based on nutrition recommendations and consumer food buying patterns. The lowest price for each food in the list is recorded for each store, and an average cost for all six stores is calculated. Then the cost of the NFB for 23 different age and gender groups is calculated (see reverse). Because higher priced foods, snack foods and foods of little nutritional value are not included in the NFB, its cost is lower than the weekly food budget for many people.

The cost of the NFB for a family of four¹ in June 2007 was \$128.57.

Food Insecurity

Many families with low incomes cannot afford the cost of healthy groceries. According to the National Population Health Survey, they are likely to experience "food insecurity". Households with food insecurity have limited or uncertain access to enough food for a healthy, active life. These households have reduced quality and variety of meals, and may have irregular food intake. Households relying on social assistance, employment insurance, Workers' Compensation or alimony were particularly likely to report experiences of food insecurity. In spite of rising costs, social assistance rates in Ontario have not increased since 1993. (An increase of 3% is scheduled for February/March 2005.)

Food as a basic human right

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing, medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948

Everyone has a fundamental right...to be free from hunger.

World Food Summit, 1996

Over 11 percent of the families in Renfrew County live on low incomes². Many of these families are not able to buy enough healthy foods to meet their needs.

Cost of the Nutritious Food Basket in Renfrew County

See the other side of this sheet for the steps to calculating the cost of the NFB for a week for your family or group. For more information about the NFB, call the Renfrew County and District Health Unit at 735-8651 or 1-800-267-1097.

¹ The reference family of four includes a man and a woman, each aged 25 to 49 years; a boy 13-15 years; and a girl 7 – 9 years of age.

² Low income figures are determined by Statistics Canada and indicate difficult financial circumstances due to spending a high proportion of income on basic necessities.

Calculating the cost of the Nutritious Food Basket for your family or group

Follow the steps below to find out how much a weekly Nutritious Food Basket costs for your family or group.

1. Write the age and gender of all the people you are feeding.

For example, Elizabeth is feeding:

- ◆ herself, 42 years old
- ◆ her 2 sons, 13 and 9 years old
- ◆ her daughter, 11 years old.

2. Find their age and gender in the chart below and write the cost of feeding each person. Total these costs.

In Elizabeth's case, this would be:

◆ woman, age 25 to 49	\$28.56
◆ boy, age 13 to 15	\$36.65
◆ boy, age 7 to 9	\$25.21
◆ girl, age 10 to 12	\$28.74
Total Cost	\$119.16

3. Since it costs a little more to feed small groups of people and a little less to feed larger groups, you may have to adjust the total cost found in Step 2.

Use the following adjustment for family size if it applies to your situation.

- 1 person:** increase costs by 15% (multiply by 1.15)
- 2 people:** increase costs by 10% (multiply by 1.10)
- 3 people:** increase costs by 5% (multiply by 1.05)
- 4 people:** make no change
- 5 people:** decrease costs by 5% (multiply by 0.95)
- 6 people or more:** decrease costs by 10% (multiply by 0.90)

In Elizabeth's case, she would not have to make any adjustments to the total cost of the nutritious food basket for her family of four.

Weekly cost of the Nutritious Food Basket in Renfrew County (June 2007)

	Age	Cost/week
Child	1	\$15.00
	2 to 3	15.90
	4 to 6	21.02
Boy	7 to 9	25.21
	10 to 12	31.33
	13 to 15	36.65
Girl	16 to 18	42.75
	7 to 9	24.16
	10 to 12	28.74
Man	13 to 15	30.75
	16 to 18	29.26
	19 to 24	40.45
Woman	25 to 49	39.20
	50 to 74	35.46
	75+	32.16

	Age	Cost/week
Woman	19 to 24	\$29.94
	25 to 49	28.56
	50 to 74	28.03
	75+	27.30
Pregnant 1st trimester	13 to 15	33.95
	16 to 18	33.91
	19 to 24	33.06
	25 to 49	31.72
Pregnant 2nd and 3rd trimester	13 to 15	35.86
	16 to 18	36.44
	19 to 24	35.29
	25 to 49	33.65
Breastfeeding	13 to 15	36.91
	16 to 18	37.42
	19 to 24	36.15
	25 to 49	34.36

Based on an example in Monitoring the Cost of a Nutritious Food Basket, Ontario Ministry of Health, 1998