

Nutrition Facts

The Weekly Cost of the Nutritious Food Basket London and Middlesex County (2012)

This information represents the approximate cost to eat well in Middlesex County and London. Weekly costs are based on a May 2012 survey of 67 food items (the *Nutritious Food Basket*) from 12 main chain and independent grocery stores in Middlesex County and London. The foods surveyed are determined by food purchasing patterns of average Canadians and data provided by Statistics Canada. The *Nutritious Food Basket* is calculated to meet the nutrient needs of most people in each age and sex group.

	Age	Approximate Cost Per Week (\$)
Boy	2-3	23.53
	4-8	30.31
	9-13	40.26
	14-18	57.01
Girl	2-3	23.07
	4-8	29.39
	9-13	34.47
	14-18	41.20

	Age	Approximate Cost Per Week (\$)
Man	19-30	55.06
	31-50	49.78
	51-70	48.11
	70+	47.60
Woman	19-30	42.60
	31-50	42.13
	51-70	37.28
	70+	36.64
Pregnant Woman	Younger than 18 years	46.02
Pregnant Woman	19-30	46.48
Pregnant Woman	31-50	45.36
Breastfeeding Woman	Younger than 18 years	47.88
Breastfeeding Woman	19-30	49.36
Breastfeeding Woman	31-50	48.24

To estimate the cost of a nutritious diet for your household, follow these steps.

Step 1

Write down the gender and age for each person you are feeding.

Step 2

Using the chart on the other side of this fact sheet, write down the weekly food cost for each person.

Step 3

Add the weekly food costs together.

Step 4

If you feel it costs you more per person to feed a small group and less per person to feed a large group, you may choose to adjust the total cost in Step 3. The Toronto Social Planning Council suggests using the following adjustments for family size:

If you are feeding:

1 person	Multiply by 1.20
2 people	Multiply by 1.10
3 people	Multiply by 1.05
4 people	Make no change
5-6 people	Multiply by 0.95
7 or more people	Multiply by 0.90

Note: The *Nutritious Food Basket* represents **food costs only**. You may have other non-food items on your grocery list that will make your grocery bill more expensive.

Example		
Sex	Age	Approximate Cost per Week
Man	42	49.78
Woman	39	42.13
Girl	8	29.39
Boy	14	57.01
Boy	3	23.53
Subtotal =		201.84
X (0.95) Adjustment factor		\$191.75 Total per week
Total per month		\$191.75 x 4.33 = \$830.27

Your Household		
Sex	Age	Approximate Cost per Week
Subtotal =		
X Adjustment factor		Total

Understanding the Nutritious Food Basket

Generally, highly processed foods and foods with little nutrition (e.g., soft drinks, potato chips) are not included in the costing survey. The food basket does not include any foods that may be required for special diets (e.g., gluten-free products, sugar-free products). **Personal and household care items** (e.g., toothpaste, laundry detergent, soap, feminine products, cleaning and supplies) are **not** included.

Putting the Nutritious Food Basket into Action

The Nutritious Food Basket design assumes that most people have **the necessary time, food skills, and equipment** to be able to prepare most meals from scratch. It also assumes that most people are able to shop at a quality grocery store. **Food literacy and cooking skills are necessary** for people to select, prepare, and store foods to ensure healthy eating for individuals and families. If someone is unable to prepare meals from scratch, grocery costs will be greater.

Does Food Cost Too Much?

The cost of food is not the issue for most people. The main problem for many people is that their income is too low. For people living on low incomes, there is not enough money left to buy healthy food after paying rent and utility bills.

Estimated weekly food costs for local households	
2012 "Family of Four" reference group (Man 31-50 years, Woman 31-50 years, Male 14-18 years, Female 4-8 years)	\$178.30
Estimated monthly food costs for local households	
2012 "Family of Four" reference group (Man 31-50 years, Woman 31-50 years, Male 14-18 years, Female 4-8 years)	\$772.04
% of income of a family supported by a minimum wage earner	29%
% of income supported by an average income wage earner	12%

When money is tight, people are forced to make ends meet by cutting into their food budget. The food budget is not fixed as are rent and utilities. It is easier to dip into the food budget to help pay those bills each month.

- Sometimes people are forced to skip meals or fill up on cheap foods that can often be less nutritious.
- Many people on fixed incomes do not eat sufficient fruit, vegetables, and milk products because they are unable to afford them.
- Parents who are low income earners will often feed their children first and go with less food themselves. As a result, the parents' nutrition and health will suffer.
- Often as a very last resort, people are forced to use food banks or other emergency food programs.
- Foods provided in food bank hampers tend to provide only about three days' supply of food per month and often do not provide a good balance of all food groups required to stay healthy.

Poverty and Health: Impact on Families

Poverty is linked with health. Food security is necessary for good health. When an individual has adequate income for food and other necessities, he or she has a lower risk of disease.

- Poor nutrition leads to an increased risk of chronic diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and cancer, as well as conditions such as low birth weight.
- These conditions can be prevented by ensuring people are financially able to purchase adequate and nutritious foods.
- People living on low incomes have more health problems and die younger than people with higher incomes.
- Children living in low income households are more likely to get sick and are less able to do well in school.
- In 2011, 36 356 visits were made to the London Food Bank.
 - 52% of the clients reported receiving social assistance from Ontario Works or the Ontario Disability Support Program.
 - 39% of the clients were children and youth.
- In July 2012, 18 711 London residents received assistance from Ontario Works, including 6 483 children under the age of 18.

What is available after shelter and food costs?

A summary of some real life situations for people living in London appears below. These scenarios illustrate that after paying for shelter and food, minimum wage earners and households on fixed incomes and assistance have little, if any, money left over to cover other basic monthly expenses.

Monthly Income (after tax)/Costs	Single Man (Ontario Works)	Single Man (ODSP)	Single Woman over 70 years (Old Age Security/Guaranteed Income Security)	Single Mother Family of 3 (Ontario Works)	Family of 4 (Minimum Wage)	Family of 4 (Medium Income after tax)
Monthly Income, Including Benefits & Credits	\$642	\$1115	\$1326	\$1855	\$2639	\$6360
Estimated Shelter Cost	\$570	\$721	\$721	\$896	\$1048	\$1048
Cost of a Nutritious Diet	\$215.55	\$215.55	\$158.65	\$556.53	\$772.04	\$772.04
WHAT'S LEFT?	-\$143.55	\$178.45	\$446.35	\$402.47	\$818.96	\$4539.96
% Income Required for Shelter	89%	65%	54%	48%	40%	16%
% Income Required for Nutritious Diet	34%	19%	12%	30%	29%	12%

REMEMBER: People still need to pay for utilities, phone, transportation, cleaning supplies, personal care items, clothing, gift, entertainment, internet, school essentials, medical and dental costs, and other purchases.

Notes: Rental estimates from CMHC Rental Market Report – Ontario Highlights (Spring 2012). Utility costs may or may not be included in the figures that go into calculating the averages. Utility costs vary considerably based on age and condition of housing, type of heating, range of appliances, air conditioning or cooling, and household size.

Learn More about Poverty and Hunger

www.povertyfreeontario.ca

www.dothemath.thestop.org

www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/breakingthecycle/strategy/strategy.aspx

www.therealissue.ca

www.foodbankscanada.ca

www.oafb.ca

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For more information, call 519-663-5317, ext. 2353.
November 2012