

BLUE ZONES

“Fresh air impoverishes the doctor.” – Danish proverb

Meet you at the aisle: Healthy shopping tips to take with you to the grocery store

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Grocery shopping is a way of life these days, whether you are physically going to the grocery store or shopping online.

Even if you are a seasoned grocery shopper, or grocery shopping is a new task now that you are working from home more often, there are temptations around every corner. We all know the old adage “don’t go to the grocery store when you’re hungry”, as this can cause additions to your cart that only add up to empty calories.

Fueling our bodies with proper nutrients is vital to keeping our immune systems strong, especially in the midst of a pandemic, and keeping our minds sharp to avoid an afternoon crash.

Here are a few tips and tricks to make sure you stay on track, even when your sweet tooth comes calling.

Steer clear of aisles you don't need to go down

If you know you don't have any canned goods on your list, skip the canned foods and condiments aisle all together. These items are often stocked with extra sodium and sugar. If you do choose canned veggies, go for those that have the label "low" or "no" salt added. This way you can add salt at home as you cook, which will be far less than the amount added in those cans. That being said, fresh veggies are always the way to go, and frozen veggies are an awesome alternative as well. This way you are adhering to the Blue Zones Power 9 Principle, Plant Slant, one of nine principles shared by the longest-lived people in the world.

Read labels

Always choose products with the least amount of added ingredients. The



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more items you see on the label, the more that product has been added to and altered from its original form. Avoid items that contain high fructose corn syrup, as this additive is an artificial sugar and may be linked to health issues such as diabetes and heart disease.

The bottom line is, grocery shopping can be intimidating, especially if you are trying to alter your diet and lead a healthier lifestyle. Some great, free resources are available to help ease the

learning curve and get you on the right track.

MyPlate.gov, part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, offers a free quiz that provides tips and guidance on all the food groups, from fish to fats. The MyPlate application for iPhone and Android allows you to see the breakdown of the foods you are eating and how they impact your daily recommended intake. MyPlate has a large database of most items you can find in the grocery store,

and you can also custom add your favorite foods.

If you are craving something sweet and satisfying, consider adding these snack ingredients to your cart.

Yogurt is a great source of protein and probiotics, whether in dairy or non-dairy form (such as cashew yogurt). Add a cup of yogurt to a packet of plain instant oatmeal. Then, add a handful of your favorite berries, such as organic strawberries, blueberries, or blackberries. Add a scoop of unsweetened nut butter. \

Cashew butter is a great choice for added healthy fat and protein and has been linked to healthy weight loss and blood sugar level control. Sprinkle with some cinnamon, and this combination of carbohydrates, fat, and protein, will make for a sweetly satisfying snack that will keep you full, provide energy, and help curve those cravings.

Blue Zones Project works with grocery stores and markets in Southwest Florida to include Wynn's Market in Naples and Legrand Caribbean Market in Immokalee to make healthy choices easier for customers while helping to increase the bottom line. It's a win-win for the customers and the stores. If you are a grocery store or market or know of one in Southwest Florida that would like to partner with Blue Zones Project for free, contact David Longfield-Smith at david.longfieldsmith@sharecare.com.

Brought to Southwest Florida by NCH Healthcare System, in collaboration with Sharecare, Inc. Blue Zones Project is a part of Southwest Florida's well-being improvement initiative that encourages changes in the community that lead to healthier options. For more information about Blue Zones Project Southwest Florida, visit southwestflorida.bluezonesproject.com.

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