The Cost of Cheap Food

WITH HEALTH COACH OLIVIA KNIGHT

We continue to experience the cost of essentials rising, including the ever-increasing cost of food. These rising costs are creating competition amongst supermarkets to provide food at cheaper prices, which sounds positive at first glance, but what cost does this cheap food come at?

Many people are under the misconception that healthy food is more expensive and cite this as a reason for buying cheaper food options such as convenience, takeaway and fast foods. However, these "cheaper" foods tend to be poorer quality and include many chemicals and preservatives.

Lack of time

In my work, I meet many people who talk about the monetary costs and also that their time comes at a premium as they live busy lives.

Our parents and grandparents invested more time preparing and cooking meals. Studies show variation in the numbers, but looking at recent studies, the average adult spends a third less time preparing and cooking meals than in the 1950's.

Today we want food quickly and each year shows increases in the number of times we eat out or choose takeaways and ready meals.

Meals that are ready prepared may come under the guise of being "healthy" but they are often full of chemicals and preservatives and we have an increasing awareness of the dangers of ultra processed foods and the stress they put our body under.

Diet related health issues

We have access to the widest range of foods than ever before, yet our diet tends to be the least healthy. We're also observing a high number of dietary related diseases.

Obesity puts us at increased risk of type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, stroke, heart disease, certain cancers, osteoarthritis, sleep apnoea and breathing problems, gallstones, fertility problems, joint and back pain and mental health issues such as depression and anxiety, plus recent studies have suggested links to dementia and Alzheimer's disease – that's quite a list!

Obesity and related diseases have huge impacts on reduction of life expectancy and cost the NHS more money than any other health problem. Indeed, a 2021 study* from the University of Glasgow reported that obesity had now overtaken smoking as the number one cause of death in the UK for people over the age of 45.

Take back control

However, we can take back control by spending a little more time planning and cooking meals and improving the quality of our nutrition.

Simple steps:
- Eat seasonal, locally sourced food
- Plan meals
- Write a shopping list
- Meal preparation
- Batch cook and freeze

Benefits:
- Improved nutrition quality and diversity
- Manage weight and reduce likelihood of obesity
- Lower food costs
- Save time
- Reduce food waste
- Reduce stress and improve positive mental health

Improve general health

In summary, when we take a little more time cooking food from scratch, we reduce the amount of chemicals and preservatives we consume, we reduce waste and spend less.

We benefit in many ways, not just with improved nutrition; we benefit from eating together, putting less pressure on our environment and reducing consumption of unhealthy ultra processed foods.

If you would like some help and support to improve your diet, please give me a call on: 07541 222177.

Olivia

* Ref: https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-021-10167-3