



THE SUPERMARKET TRICK THAT Saves Money—and Leads to Weight Loss!

JACKPOT: Spend less, save time and slim down. Experts reveal how buying just 21 versatile grocery items each week can transform your health, budget and life!

By LISA MAXBAUER

Necessity is the mother of invention...or of helpful TikTok trends. With food prices up in recent years, people have embraced a clever grocery shopping strategy that promises to save money...helping us tighten our belts in more ways than one.

High grocery bills can actually harm our health. According to the International Food Information Council's annual survey, 91% of people saw an increase in food prices last year and 30% revealed they were forced to make less-healthy food choices as a result. That's a tough pill to swallow, given that 43% of people also said they wanted to lose weight. And what we toss into our cart has consequences. In one small study, people who ate ultra-processed (often cheaper) foods gained 2 pounds in just two weeks. That could mean 50+ pounds a year.

To the rescue: the 6 to 1 Method. This flexible food-shopping framework challenges us to buy 6 different vegetables, 5 fruits, 4 proteins, 3 starches, 2 sauces and 1 fun item each week to build the bulk of our meals and snacks. (Quantities can

be expanded based on household size.) Forget the old food pyramid or the pie-chart meal plate. The best healthy-eating tool may be to simply picture 21 wholesome items in your shopping cart.

"The 6 to 1 Method has changed my life!" said creator and chef Will Coleman in a social media video that went viral on the subject. "I'm saving lots of money on groceries, and I'm getting in and out of the store fast," he tells FIRST. "I'm most surprised about the many audiences it's reaching: single folks, people

"What I've been hearing a lot is that people with diabetes or who struggle with overeating or undereating are using this plan because it's so healthy."

—*Chef Will Coleman*

who have kids, people who are vegetarians. It's such a versatile method."

This playful approach offers gentle guidelines instead of strict rules on portions or servings. Users can scale up or down based on their needs. If chicken is one of your proteins, you might buy a single breast or a family-size tray; or one apple or multiple bags of apples. Some items (like a gravy packet) are single-use, while others (a bag of rice) can contribute to multiple meals. Plus, you can use items in your freezer, pantry and spice rack to round out recipes.

The method started as a way to save money, but it evolved to help many achieve their health goals. *Today* show dietitian Natalie Rizzo, R.D., tried the 6 to 1 Method and says, "I do think it can help with weight loss. It encourages you to live in moderation. And it definitely can reduce cravings or binges."

TikTok doctor Emi Hosoda, M.D., who lost 100 pounds in her 50s, says, "This method is helpful if someone is eating mostly processed meals and wants to convert to more whole foods." The plan prioritizes produce and protein, both of which are proven to support weight loss. In

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that study mentioned earlier, people shed 2 pounds in two weeks when they focused on these foods.

People are also discovering unexpected health benefits from using Coleman's shopping hack, including better sleep, balanced blood sugar and more energy. "My entire mission is to get folks back into the kitchen," he says. "If you're stocking your fridge with more fruits and veggies, it's inevitable that you're going to eat a more healthy diet that will lead to a healthier life."

Jennifer Reagan used 6 to 1 to maintain a recent 40-pound weight loss. She noticed benefits from eating more fiber-rich produce. "I easily lost 4 to 6 inches of bloat

around my waist," she says. "As an older woman, fiber has become the holy grail." Reagan, who runs LowDoughFamily.com to feed her family of four for under \$100 a week, found the plan helped with recipe prep. "Many of us think of meal planning as this complicated sudoku puzzle. But the 6 to 1 Method gives us enough structure to get started." (Find sample meal plans to feed a crowd on her site.)

Skipping impulse buys and sugary snacks has other benefits too, like saving money and reducing waste. One user shared, "I think this method might change my life. I've overspent on groceries and things have gone bad for way too long!"

The simple magic behind the 6 to 1 Method

Tap into taste: This shopping philosophy was created by a chef, so you know it can lead to delicious-tasting meals. And year after year, Americans say they value taste as their number-one food shopping motivator, followed by price, health, convenience and then sustainability.

Escape food ruts: We all know it's easy to fall into a pattern where we keep eating the same choices for fear of decision fatigue. Wendy Bazilian, DrPH, author of *Eat Clean, Stay Lean*, says, "Last I checked, the average grocery store has over 60,000 items. It's daunting under the best circumstances." She adds, "This

IT WORKED FOR ME

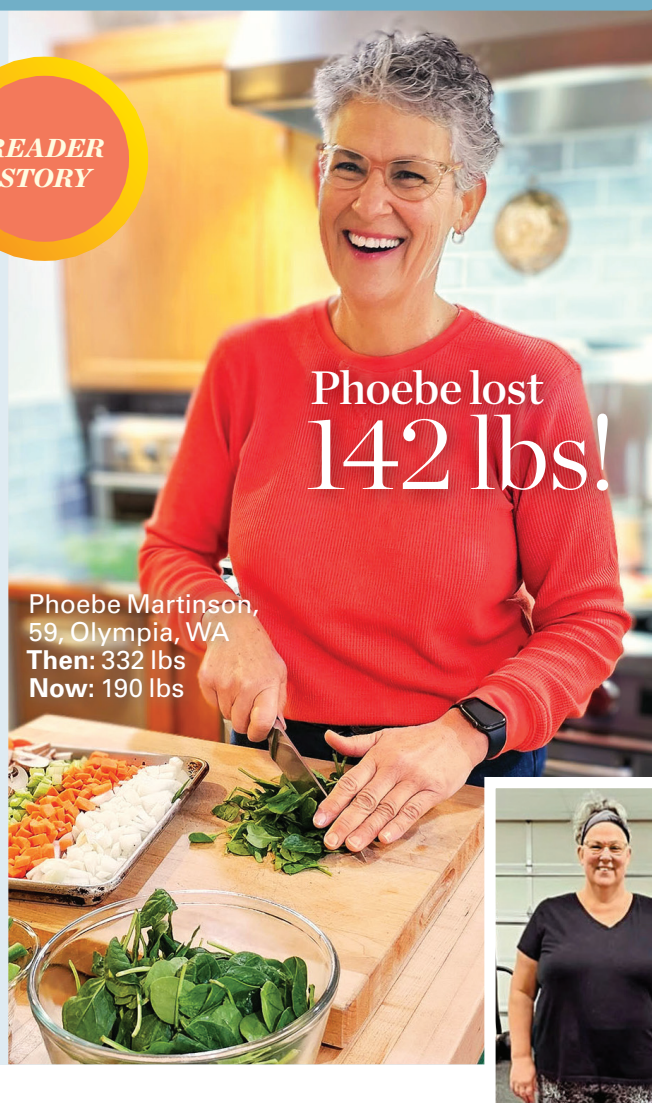
"I went from size 4X to 12!"

While parking in her new, comfy recliner evening after evening, Phoebe Martinson began to feel doomed. Stiff, sore and overweight, she remembers thinking, *I am on the same path as my dad who went for a nap and never woke up at 62 years old...*

As a busy pastry chef, Phoebe never ate breakfast and consumed too much sugar. Ready for a change, she started exercising. Although she hadn't heard of the 6 to 1 Method yet, she used its principles of eating more whole foods. She says, "I stopped going out for fast food. I figured, I'm a chef. If I can't feed myself, I shouldn't be in the business." She whipped up filling meals like mushroom, onion and spinach omelets. She enjoyed salads with chicken or prawns and Skinnygirl Asian Sesame Ginger Dressing. She roasted more veggies, snacked on fruit and nuts and purchased quinoa. "I had no problems with cravings. My whole body started to work better."

Phoebe **dropped 10 pounds in a month** and 100 pounds in nine months. Like the 6 to 1 Method, she says, "There was never a diet. I just changed the way I looked at food, and I cut out the extra stuff." The payoff: "My whole mental health has changed. I have self-esteem and hope for an exciting future." Now, Phoebe is also a wellness coach. Find her community on Instagram @phoebe.gets.fit. She says, "I wanted to save my life, and I have!"

READER STORY



Phoebe lost 142 lbs!

Phoebe Martinson, 59, Olympia, WA
Then: 332 lbs
Now: 190 lbs

method is a really good way to navigate the sea of choices. It feels very digestible to try.” If you’re used to buying only broccoli or lettuce, now you have a reason to taste test other choices, without the overwhelm.

Boost nutrients: Consumption of fruits and veggies has been declining—to less than one a day, according to the Produce for Better Health Foundation’s State of the Plate report. A rep for the group shared, “It is no exaggeration that we are in the midst of a fruit and vegetable consumption crisis.” But the 6 to 1 Method helps build healthy momentum in the nutrient department. Bazilian says, “You make one change and suddenly you start reaping small rewards.”

Indeed, a pile of evidence supports that diversifying what you eat—like trying lots of different nutrient-rich fruits and veggies—can improve our digestion, metabolism and mental clarity.

Quell cravings: The method provides a foundation, but it doesn’t feel like a restrictive diet. Rizzo says, “You’re allowed to buy one fun thing, and even if it’s Oreos, it’s probably fewer treats than what most people buy. You’re not buying chips *and* donuts *and* soda.” Bazilian adds, “When we limit within our pantry, there’s less falling into craveable moments. What you have to grab for a snack is a piece of fruit instead.”

Heal your gut: The plan prizes satiety-boosting fiber, which nourishes the intestinal lining and reduces inflammation, two moves linked to improved weight loss. Bazilian says, “By having six veggies and five fruits, it automatically creates some of the diversification of nutrients that is so important to gut health.” And studies show that a produce-focused eating pattern can speed weight loss and improve multiple metabolic conditions.

Calm hormone hassles: “This can be a very positive method for women over 40 dealing with

perimenopausal issues because they tend to need more fiber-rich veggies and fruits,” says Bazilian. It also limits sugar-laden items and alcohol, which Dr. Hosoda says are proven to trigger menopausal hot flashes.

How to fill your cart using this slimming method

6 vegetables: Dr. Hosoda recommends avoiding high-sugar options like corn and potatoes and choosing low-glycemic veggies like cabbage, spinach and cauliflower.

5 fruits: Frozen can save you time for breakfast smoothies. Dietitian Frances Largeman-Roth, RDN, author of *Everyday Snack Tray*, tried the method and says, “Making sure you’re actually using those veggies and fruits during the week is key to having success with this plan.”

4 proteins: Reach for a variety of options such as meat, fish, eggs, dairy, tofu, beans or legumes. Dr. Hosoda recommends lean, grass-fed options. And that protein isn’t just for meals: Largeman-Roth adds, “For women who are trying to lose weight, planning for healthy, filling snacks like Greek yogurt, nuts and seeds is key to success.”

3 starches: Largeman-Roth recommends whole-grain cereals, multigrain bread and farro. And Dr. Hosoda often tells patients trying to lose weight to eat complex grains like wild rice or buckwheat.

2 sauces: Here’s where the flavor comes in with sauces, spreads and dips. Dr. Hosoda advises seeking out low-sugar, low-sodium dressings and condiments. Coleman’s favorite go-to options include hummus, tomato sauce, salsa and pesto.

1 fun item: To dodge deprivation, Coleman tried kettle chips. Rizzo bought peanut butter pretzels. And Dr. Hosoda says she would choose almond milk ice cream.

Ready to have fun with this plan? Just start by counting 6-5-4-3-2-1!

—*additional reporting by*
Diane Herbst

4 Shoppers Share Their Top Meal Ideas



THE PLANT EATER: Natalie Rizzo, R.D.

She made fruit and Greek yogurt breakfast smoothies, farro grain salad with veggies for lunch, and bean enchiladas or fried rice with tofu for dinner.



THE DIETITIAN: Frances Largeman-Roth, RDN

She tried salmon and asparagus with brown rice and teriyaki, then peanut butter soba noodles with chicken and hoisin sauce.



THE CHEF: Will Coleman

He made Cobb salad, shrimp and grits, meatball pasta and pizza grilled cheese. Find his e-book with shopping lists and meal ideas at ChefWillColeman.com.



THE MONEY-SAVING MOM: Jennifer Reagan

She bought London broil steak, chicken thighs and breakfast sausage, plus colorful veggies like sweet potatoes. The best part: “Trying new sauces.”