

Unit Pricing

Valuable assistance to cost conscious consumers.

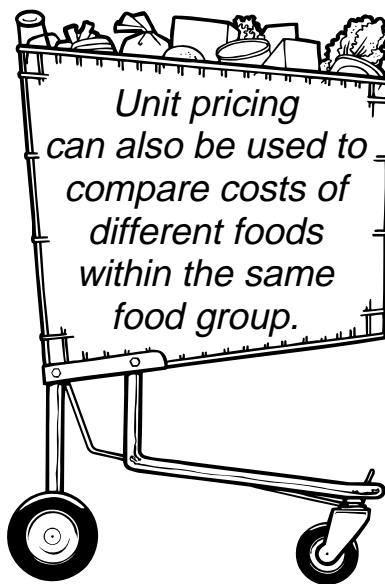
If you understand unit pricing, you can tell what you're getting for your food dollar. The unit price of a product is the dollar and cent cost per standard unit of weight or measurement: the cost per pound, quart, or number. Many stores now have unit price labels on the edge of the shelf under each product.

Unit pricing is nothing new, nor is it required by law. Some products have carried unit pricing for years. Meat, for example, has been sold by the pound. Many fresh vegetables and fruits are priced by the pound.

Canned and packaged foods are usually unit priced in terms of cents per ounce. Foods sold in larger amounts—for instance, 5 or 10 pounds of flour or sugar—may be unit priced by cost per pound. Beverages may be unit priced by price per fluid ounce, quart, or gallon.

A good way to check for value.

To find the unit price on an item, divide the price by the total number of ounces or pounds for the item you're considering. For example: if a 12-oz. can sells for 54 cents and a 16-oz. can of the same product sells



for 72 cents, which is the better buy? In this case, both cost the same—4.5 cents an ounce. Let your needs determine which you buy.

Household items like detergents also carry unit pricing. Frozen foods may not be unit priced, so you'll have to make your own calculations to find the best buy. Items on sale or on special usually don't have the revised unit price available. This is a good way to check the amount of price reduction of the sale item to see if it's really a bargain.

Unit pricing compares price only. It doesn't consider judgment of quality, performance or individual preferences. It can be used to compare costs among different brands of the same food, different sizes of a product, and different forms of the same food.

Tell the store manager if you find outdated unit price labels, labels mounted in the wrong location or other problems with unit pricing. This lets him know that unit pricing is being used by their customers. It also encourages accuracy on the part of store employees.

For more information on unit pricing; contact your local county Extension office.