

# 2014

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What is the cost of healthy food?

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Why does it matter?

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Who can't afford healthy food?

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Why can't people afford healthy food?

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What can individuals and communities do?

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## The Real Cost of **Eating** Well in Hastings and Prince Edward Counties



Health Unit



Hastings &  
Prince Edward Counties

Hastings and Prince Edward Counties Health Unit

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## What is the cost of healthy food?

Every year, the Hastings and Prince Edward Counties Health Unit surveys the price of food items from grocery stores across both counties. Using this data and a survey tool called the Nutritious Food Basket, we calculate the cost to purchase one week's worth of basic healthy groceries for different age and gender groups.

In 2014, the cost of groceries for a family of four in Hastings and Prince Edward (H&PE) counties was \$191.33. To arrive at this cost we sourced the lowest price available for 67 food items in 8 area grocery stores during the month of May. The items included meet recommendations from Canada's Food Guide and do not include prepared convenience foods or household non-food items. We then used this data to calculate the average cost to feed a reference family of four, and 22 different age and gender groups.

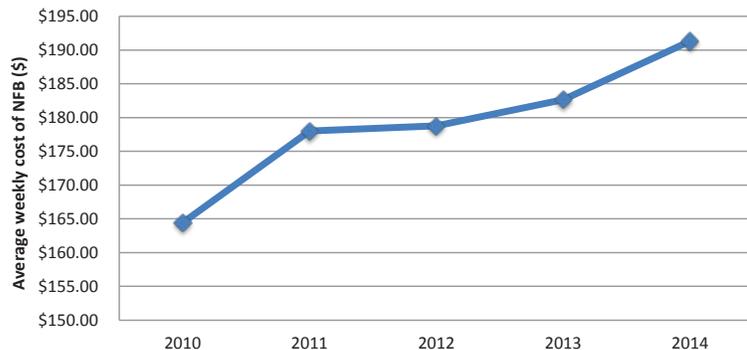
The weekly cost of groceries for a family of four is now \$191.33. That is an increase of 14 percent in five years.



## Why does the cost of food matter?

We know that when money is tight, people are forced to cut into their food budget in order to pay for their rent and other living expenses. They may skip meals, eat fewer vegetables and fruit, drink less milk, and fill up on non-nutritious foods because they are cheaper. The result of this unhealthy diet is an increased risk of chronic illness, and poor growth and development in children.

### Estimated average weekly cost of the Nutritious Food Basket (NFB) for a family of four living in H&PEC



Family of four – 2 adults (male and female ages 31-50), 2 children (girl age 8, boy age 14)  
Year-to-year comparisons of NFB data must be approached cautiously. The store selection process strongly influences the comparability of yearly data

## Who can't afford healthy food?

Hunger, food insecurity, and poverty can happen to anyone.

In 2012, over half of the food insecure households in Ontario relied on wages or salaries from employment as their main source of income. Even when working, factors like part-time employment, lack of benefits, and uncertain working conditions can make it hard for people to meet basic needs.

The majority of households relying on social assistance as their main source of income were food insecure.

## Why can't people afford healthy food?

For people living on minimum wage, Ontario Works, or the Ontario Disability Support Program, it is hard to make ends meet. After paying rent, they still have to pay for other necessities such as:

- Heat and hydro
- Child care
- Clothing
- Home maintenance
- Household cleaners
- Personal hygiene products
- Telephone
- Eye and dental care
- Children's school costs
- Transportation, car maintenance and gas

When income is low and these living expenses are high, people are left with little money to buy nutritious food. Too often, income is so low that people are forced to go hungry.

**Consider these real-life situations for people living in Hastings and Prince Edward counties:**

	Households with Children				Single Person Households		
	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3	Scenario 4	Scenario 5	Scenario 6	Scenario 7
	 Ontario Works	 Minimum Wage Earner	 Median Ontario Income	 Ontario Works	 Ontario Works	 ODSP	 Senior OAS/GIS
<b>Income</b>							
Total Monthly Income (after Tax)	\$2,156	\$2,748	\$6,954	\$1,961	\$709	\$1,179	\$1,513
<b>Expenses</b>							
Monthly Rent (apartments including utilities)	\$1,159 (3 Bdrm)	\$1,159 (3 Bdrm)	\$1,159 (3 Bdrm)	\$907 (2 Bdrm)	\$605 (Bachelor)	\$781 (1 Bdrm)	\$781 (1 Bdrm)
Food (Nutritious Food Basket)	\$823	\$823	\$823	\$622	\$276	\$276	\$202
<b>Monthly Income Remaining for Other Expenses</b>							
	<b>\$176</b>	\$766	\$4,972	\$432	<b>-\$172</b>	\$122	\$530

A single male living on Ontario Works could spend most of his income on the rent for a bachelor apartment. There would be little money left for food or other expenses.

The situation is not much better for a family of four on Ontario Works. After paying for rent and food, they have only \$176 left to cover all other expenses.

% Income Required for Rent	54%	42%	17%	46%	85%	66%	52%
% Income Required for Nutritious Food	38%	30%	12%	32%	39%	23%	13%

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) defines affordable housing as shelter which does not exceed 30% of household income.

## What can we do?

Food insecurity is an issue that can be addressed locally. In 2012, 1 in 9 households in H&PE counties experienced food insecurity. This works out to greater than 17, 600 local residents.



Everyone has a role to play to make sure that all people in Hastings and Prince Edward counties have access to a nutritious, adequate diet. Start by educating yourself about the causes of poverty and hunger, then get involved:

### Resources:

For more information about poverty and hunger, go to:

#### Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy

<https://www.ontario.ca/home-and-community/realizing-our-potential-poverty-reduction-strategy-2014-2019>

#### Food Banks Canada

[www.foodbankscanada.ca](http://www.foodbankscanada.ca)

#### Poverty Round Table

[www.povertyroundtablehpe.ca](http://www.povertyroundtablehpe.ca)

#### Food Security Network for Hastings and Prince Edward Counties

[www.yourhealthunit.ca](http://www.yourhealthunit.ca)  
(Go to: Community/Food Security/Food Security Network)

### Advocate for:

- Improved social assistance and minimum wage rates
- The adoption of a living wage in Hastings and Prince Edward counties
- Affordable housing and accessible transportation
- Accessible and affordable child care

### Volunteer to help others:

- Share your gardening skills or donate growing space to local groups
- Start a community kitchen in your neighbourhood
- Offer your time to a Food For Learning Student Nutrition Program
- Donate time, food, or money to support our local emergency food programs
- Think about where your food comes from and buy local products
- Join a local food security or poverty reduction network

**Income is one of the best predictors of health. When people are short of money, they are more likely to have poor health.**

**Both individuals and communities must deal with the impact. That is why we all need to focus on eliminating poverty.**



### Health Unit

  
Hastings &  
Prince Edward Counties

For more details about the Nutritious Food Basket contact the Hastings and Prince Edward Counties Health Unit.

**[www.yourhealthunit.ca](http://www.yourhealthunit.ca)**

Email: [foodsecurity@hpechu.on.ca](mailto:foodsecurity@hpechu.on.ca)

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Monday to Friday between 8:30 am and 4:30 pm

Sources: Please contact the Hastings and Prince Edward Counties Health Unit for a detailed list of references.

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