

Nutritious and Affordable Food Basket: Key Findings from the 2023-2024 Report

For over 70 years, **Alima, Perinatal Social Nutrition Centre**, has recorded and documented variations in food prices in Montreal. Once again this year, Alima is putting its expertise to good use by producing data for its **Nutritious and Affordable Food Basket (NAFB), the tool that estimates the cost of a basic balanced grocery basket.**

This report presents the results of price surveys in **Montreal** over four periods: October 2023, January 2024, April 2024 and July 2024.

Here are the 10 highlights of this report:

1. In October 2023, the cost of a basic balanced grocery basket to feed a typical family was \$1,191 per month, or \$9.78 per person per day. In July 2024, this cost went up to \$1,223, or \$10.06 per person per day. This represents a **3% increase** over 10 months. For a family, this amounts to an additional annual expense of \$396.
2. From October 2021 to July 2024, a period of **less than three years, the price of the NAFB for a typical family increased by 28%**, resulting in an additional annual cost of \$3,235 for the same food products.
3. This year, **Alima accompanied 953 pregnant women in situations of vulnerability.** While there was significant diversity among the families that we worked with, the most commonly observed family composition consisted of a pregnant woman, a man and a boy between the ages of 1 and 3 years old. The NAFB was calculated at \$199 per week. The report presents three examples of families with different incomes, **none of whom were able to afford the food budget deemed necessary by the NAFB** for a basic balanced grocery basket.
4. The basket presented in this report includes 68 nutritious and low-cost food items, divided into 11 categories, all intended to be cooked at home:

Vegetables	Grains products
Fruits	Fats
Starches	Sugars
Plant-based sources of protein	Commercial infant formula
Animal sources of protein	Baby cereal
Dairy products and plant-based beverages	

¹Formerly the Montreal Diet Dispensary

²A "typical family" is defined here as a man (31-50 years old), a woman (31-50 years old), a boy (14-18 years old) and a girl (9-13 years old).

5. Of those 11 categories, 3 saw price increases of over 10% between the first and last periods under study: vegetables (+14%), **baby cereal (+15%) and commercial infant formula (+45%)**.
6. The last two categories primarily concern children under the age of 1. As such, the increase in food prices this year will have a particular **impact on the parents of young children**.
7. The financial cost involved in using commercial infant formula (CIF) is considerable compared to breastfeeding. For a child aged 0 to 6 months, the costs associated with breastfeeding are estimated to be nearly **four times** lower than those for CIF, representing savings of \$111 per month. **All families should be able to afford this essential food when breastfeeding is not possible or not chosen**.
8. It is possible to reduce food costs using various strategies, such as shopping for specials at the supermarket, buying seasonal food, opting for certain types of proteins over others, etc.
9. While it's possible to reduce food spending using these and other strategies, **the role of the NAFB remains to measure the cost of a basic balanced diet**, excluding ready-to-eat meals and ultra-processed foods. In this scenario, families are assumed to have culinary skills, the time needed to cook, and access to appropriate kitchen equipment, which is not always the case.
10. The NAFB can represent a disproportionate share of families' budgets, especially when considering mandatory expenses like housing. For a family living on government assistance, the cost of **the NAFB can represent over 40% of their annual income**, making it difficult to access a balanced diet and increasing their risk of food insecurity. In 2020, approximately 300,000 people in Montreal lived in a household experiencing food insecurity, which can have serious impacts on the quality of both their nutrition and health.



Visit our website, centrealima.ca, to consult the 2023-2024 Nutritious and Affordable Food Basket report in its entirety (available in French only).

centrealima.ca

For any questions, please contact us at ppne@centrealima.ca.

³DRSP CCSMTL - Regional Public Health Department, CIUSSS du Centre-Sud-de-l'Île-de-Montréal. (2024). Portrait de l'insécurité alimentaire à Montréal en 2020.