



Healthy Eating

Domain Solutions



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The Importance of Healthy Eating

Two-thirds of American adults are overweight or obese.⁽¹⁾ Evidence has linked higher amounts of body fat with several chronic conditions, including 13 types of cancer. In fact, research shows that 18% of all new cancer cases in the US each year are related to excess body weight, poor nutrition, excess alcohol consumption, and physical inactivity.⁽²⁾⁽³⁾

The good news is that a healthy weight can help to reduce the risk of many chronic diseases, including cancer, heart disease, and diabetes.⁽⁴⁾⁽⁵⁾⁽⁶⁾⁽⁷⁾ And the way to reach or maintain a healthy weight is to make good nutrition and physical activity choices on a regular basis.

The American Cancer Society recommends that people choose food and drinks in amounts that help them get to and stay at a healthy weight. To help reduce the risk of cancer, they also recommend that people consume a diet that is high in vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and lean proteins but is low in red and processed meat to help reduce the risk of cancer.



Evidence-Based Practices 1 & 2: Healthy Foods and Beverages Available, Subsidized, Promoted

Your employees spend much of their day at work and might make many of their breakfast, lunch, snack, and beverage decisions there, too. This presents a unique opportunity to support them in their desire for good health by making good nutrition convenient, accessible, and affordable.

Implementation Options

There are many considerations that go into creating a healthier food and beverage environment for your workplace. Steps might include:

- Building a team that engages stakeholders and champions from across the company
- Assessing the current environment and identifying opportunities to make healthy options available to employees
- Identifying marketing and promotional strategies, including placement, promotion, pricing, and labeling
- Developing and implementing a communication plan to educate staff and visitors

Choose nutrition standards for your company.

A critical piece of establishing a healthy food and beverage environment is adopting a set of defined nutrition standards for snacks, meals, and beverages. There are established nutrition standards from reputable organizations that can guide your decisions around what to offer.

Tools and Resources*

Nutrition standards for foods and beverages to assist employers

- Vending Machine Food and Beverage Standards - <https://www.acs4ccc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Vending-Machine-Food-and-Beverage-Standards-v12.pdf>



- Workplace-Prepared Food and Beverage Standards - <https://www.acs4ccc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Workplace-Prepared-Food-Standards-v11.pdf>

Resources for employees

- Tips for Healthy Eating – This resource is currently being updated.
- Tips for Eating Well on a Budget - This resource is currently being updated.

Toolkits for employers

There are toolkits customized for specific industry sectors, offering comprehensive guidance on how to create a healthy food environment in the workplace. They include information on pricing, placement, and other marketing strategies to encourage healthy choices.

Toolkit for Healthy Food Service at Public and Private Sectors:

- Toolkit for Building and Implementing Healthy Food Services
http://thefoodtrust.org/uploads/media_items/healthyfoodserves.original.pdf
- Toolkit for Smart Food Choices: How to Implement Food Service Guidelines in Public Facilities
<https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/downloads/smart-food-choices-how-to-implement-food-service-guidelines.pdf>
- Toolkit for Creating Healthier Hospital Food, Beverage, and Physical Activity Environments
<https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/hospital-toolkit/pdf/creating-healthier-hospital-food-beverage-pa.pdf>

** Inclusion on this list does not imply endorsement by the American Cancer Society.*



Evidence-Based Practice 3: Reduced Access to Sugar-Sweetened Beverages

While there are many types of foods and beverages that can contribute to an unhealthy diet, sugar-sweetened beverages are a major source of added sugar and excess calories in the diets of many Americans. Consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages is a major public health concern, and providing healthier beverage options is another opportunity for workplaces to support employee efforts to make healthy choices.

Sugary drinks, like sodas, fruit juices, energy drinks, and sports drinks, have been shown to contribute significantly to obesity and chronic diseases like type 2 diabetes and heart disease. While sugar-sweetened beverages are not directly linked to cancer risk, they contribute to obesity, which in turn increases the risk of cancer.

Implementation Options

Provide healthy beverage options and reduce access to sugary drinks. Employers can create a healthier beverage environment by providing their employees with increased access to lower-calorie, non-sugar-sweetened drinks, and reducing access to high-calorie, sugary drinks. This helps employees to make healthier beverage decisions.

Tools and Resources*

Nutrition standards for foods and beverages to assist employers

- Vending Machine Food and Beverage Standards - <https://www.acs4ccc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Vending-Machine-Food-and-Beverage-Standards-v12.pdf>
- Workplace-Prepared Food and Beverage Standards - <https://www.acs4ccc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Workplace-Prepared-Food-Standards-v11.pdf>
- Sugar-Sweetened Beverage Case Studies - <https://www.acs4ccc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Sugar-Sweetened-Beverage-Case-Studies-v14.pdf>



Toolkits for employers

The following toolkit offers comprehensive guidance on reducing sugar-sweetened beverages and strategies to encourage healthy choices.

- Healthy Beverage Toolkit - Boston Public Health Commission
http://www.waterinschools.org/pdfs/BostonPHCommission_HealthyBeverageToolkitFinal.pdf

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Evidence-Based Practice 4: Healthy Options Labeled

Providing nutrition labels and signage for cafeteria food, vending machines, and food at meetings may encourage employees to choose healthier options.

Implementation Options

Label healthy food and beverage choices. You can help your employees choose healthier foods and drinks by:

- Providing signage and appropriate caloric and nutritional information for vending machine foods and beverages
- Posting signage and caloric/nutritional information at the beginning of the cafeteria line, or at the point of selection
- Posting general information on daily calorie requirements in visible places in the workplace to help employees become familiar with healthy ranges of dietary calories
- Posting caloric and nutritional information for typical snacks and meals that can help employees to better visualize the nutritional content and effects of their dietary habits

Tools and Resources*

Here are some tools and resources that might help you to get started:

Nutrition standards for foods and beverages to assist employers

- Vending Machine Food and Beverage Standards - <https://www.acs4ccc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Vending-Machine-Food-and-Beverage-Standards-v12.pdf>
- Workplace-Prepared Food and Beverage Standards - <https://www.acs4ccc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Workplace-Prepared-Food-Standards-v11.pdf>

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Evidence-Based Practice 5: Healthy Catering Policy

Another good way to demonstrate your organization's commitment to the health of your employees is healthy catering at meetings and conferences. Developing a policy for healthy food at these gatherings helps ensure that your culture of health extends beyond vending machines and cafeterias.

Implementation Options

Create a healthy catering policy. Develop a catering policy for your company. You can establish a culture of health by providing nutritious, low-calorie food options for meetings and receptions. Or, where feasible, consider not offering food at mid-morning or mid-afternoon meetings and presentations.

Tools and Resources*

Tools and resources to assist employers

- National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity Meeting Guidance
<https://cspinet.org/sites/default/files/attachment/Healthy-Meeting-Guidelines.pdf>
- The National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity offers a comprehensive suite of healthy meeting materials: guidelines, a healthy meeting pledge, and infographics.
<https://cspinet.org/protecting-our-health/nutrition/healthy-meetings>.
- 9 Hacks to a Healthier Meeting or Conference
<https://cspinet.org/sites/default/files/attachment/Healthy%20Meeting%20Hacks%20Infographic%20Final.pdf>
- Tips for Offering Healthier Options and Physical Activity at Workplace Meetings and Events - <https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/downloads/tips-for-offering-healthier-options-and-pa-at-workplace.pdf>

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Evidence-Based Practice 6: Worksite Healthy Eating or Weight Control Program

You can help your employees move toward a healthier lifestyle by creating or hosting healthy eating or weight control programs at work. Workplace programs can include information and education components, activities that target self-awareness and self-efficacy, and social support that positively affects behavioral change.

For example, The *Community Preventive Services Task Force*, an independent, non-federal panel of public health experts, recommends worksite programs to improve diet or physical activity and reduce weight among employees.⁽⁸⁾

Implementation Options

Establish a workplace healthy eating or weight control program. In addition to creating a healthy food environment using the strategies described earlier in this document, there are some easy and supportive ways to help your employees create healthier lifestyles.

- Provide information resources on effective weight loss methods and possibly offer supportive counseling. Research shows that the best diet is the one that the person can follow.
- Incentivize employees with recognition or other rewards for participating in, or completing, a weight control program with coworkers.

Tools and Resources*

Tools and resources to assist employers

- 7 Simple, Fun Wellness Challenges to Start at Work
<https://health.gov/news/blog-bayw/2016/06/7-simple-fun-wellness-challenges-to-start-at-work/>



- Workplace Weight Loss and Wellness Programs
<https://www.westsoundworkforce.com/workplace-weight-loss-and-wellness-programs/>

Additional Reading for employers

- Nutrition and Weight Management in the Workplace: A Guide for Employers
https://www.workhealthresearchnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/CDC-WHRN-Nutrition-and-Weight-Management-Employer-Guide_FINAL.pdf
- Weight Control and Employees: One Size Doesn't Fit All. Practical Guidance for Implementing Weight Control Programs in the Workplace (Northeast Business Group on Health)
https://nebgh.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Weight_Control-2014-FINAL.pdf

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Evidence-Based Practice 7: Communication with Employees

Communication strategies are critical for delivering information about expanded or improved nutrition choices available in the workplace. The frequency of messaging, as well as communicating in new and different ways, contributes to your workplace culture of health and helps keep employees motivated. ^{(9) (10)}

Implementation Options

Healthy messaging. For communicating about nutrition-related policies and programs, use the same channels you've found to be effective for communicating about other important work-related news and events. Communication examples include:

- Providing regular messages – at least quarterly – related to healthy food and beverage offerings in vending machines or cafeterias
- Providing regular messages – at least quarterly – reminding employees about the importance of a healthy diet and providing practical tips for making healthy food choices throughout the day
- Providing creative learning opportunities related to nutrition, such as healthy cooking demonstrations or activities to demonstrate how to use the Nutrition Facts Label to identify healthy options
- Sharing frequent leadership messages and demonstrating role-modeling that encourages good nutrition
- Posting resources for improving nutrition, information about accessing benefits, or company-sponsored health programs in high-traffic communication points like break rooms, meeting rooms, and intranet sites. If you have employees who use other languages besides English, make sure materials are available in the languages they use.



- Listening to diverse groups of employees, considering their feedback seriously, and incorporating this feedback into action steps is important to reach all employees with important health messages.

Tools and Resources*

Tools and resources to assist employers

- The American Cancer Society offers a PDF presentation that explains the importance of healthy nutrition and regular physical activity for cancer prevention.
Resources for employees
- Tips for Healthy Eating - This resource is currently being updated.
- Tips for Eating Well on a Budget - This resource is currently being updated.

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