

Choosing Foods and Beverages for Healthy Meetings, Conferences and Events



The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) promotes workplace practices and policies that make healthy eating choices available whenever food and beverages are provided at work-related events. Many workers consume a significant portion of food away from home. Foods consumed at cafeterias, from vending machines, and in other public food-service establishments are often not as nutritious or healthy as foods prepared at home. In general, Americans' diets exceed saturated fat and sodium recommendations, and few Americans are meeting fruit, vegetable, and whole grain recommendations. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans provides guidance on a diet that promotes health and may help prevent the effects of diet-related chronic diseases. Making healthy food available at work is one way to encourage employees to eat a healthy diet.

- In 1995, an estimated \$9.3 billion in lost productivity associated with morbidity from coronary heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes was attributed to diet.
- A poor diet is an underlying factor in the development of many conditions such as heart disease, some cancers, stroke, diabetes, and overweight and obesity.
- In 1999-2000, 65% of adults reported being overweight or obese. People who are overweight or obese are more likely to suffer from many chronic illnesses and conditions.

Guidance for Healthier Eating at Work

The guidelines listed below can be used for selecting foods and beverages for breaks or meals at meetings, conferences, and other work-related events. When planning menus, consider providing options that accommodate various dietary preferences and needs.

- 1. Offer a variety of grains—especially whole-grain foods—and fruits and vegetables.** Examples include fresh fruit and salads; fresh and cooked vegetables; whole-grain breads, pasta, and cereals; and muffins, fruit breads, or granola bars.
- 2. Provide fat-free, low-fat, or low-calorie foods and beverages.** Ideas include fat-free or low-fat dressings or toppings such as salsa, low-fat yogurt dressing, sweet mustard; low-fat or calorie desserts such as angel food cake; low-fat or skim milk, low-fat yogurt or cheeses; and lean meats, poultry or fish, cooked and dried beans, peas and lentils.
- 3. Offer foods and beverages low in added sugars.** You could serve unsweetened cereals, fruit spreads, cereal bars, water, 100% fruit juices, and regular and decaffeinated coffee or tea.
- 4. Serve foods that are low in salt and sodium,** such as unsalted pretzels, popcorn, or baked chips; grilled or roasted entrees; and entrees cooked with spices and herbs instead of salt.
- 5. Include smaller portions** such as mini-muffins or mini-bagels and 1-inch low-fat cheese squares.
- 6. Consider offering only beverages at mid-morning and mid-afternoon breaks.**

For more information on offering healthy foods at meetings, please see:

1. USDA and USDHHS. *Nutrition and Your Health: Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, USDA Home and Garden Bulletin No. 232 (fifth edition). Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 2000. Available at www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines.
2. American Public Health Association Policy Statement 9711: *Healthy Food Choices in Catered Food Situations*. APHA Policy Statements 1948-present, cumulative. Washington, DC: APHA, current volume.
3. University of Minnesota School of Public Health. *Guidelines for Offering Healthy Foods at Meetings, Seminars, and Catered Events*. Available at http://www.ahc.umn.edu/ahc_content/colleges/sph/sph_news/Nutrition.pdf
4. American Cancer Society. *Meeting Well – A Tool for Planning Healthy Meetings and Events*. American Cancer Society, 2000

