

Recommended Nutrition Standards for Procurement of Foods and Beverages Offered in the Workplace

Overview

With more than 130 million Americans employed across the United States each year, the workplace is a key environment for maintaining the health of the U.S. population. Employers should undertake comprehensive, evidence-based health promotion programs, activities, and environment and policy change, including offering healthy food and beverages throughout the workplace.¹ The benefits of a healthy employed population extend well beyond employees and the workplace to their families and their communities. Worksite wellness programming and health promotion should target at-risk and vulnerable employees, addressing issues that increase audience receptivity and make it more likely that they will participate.

Creating a Healthy Nutrition Environment

To encourage healthy and nutritious choices, employers should:

1. Offer healthy foods and beverages in vending machines, cafeterias, and for meetings and special events.
2. Provide calorie labeling on all food and beverage items on menus and menu boards in cafeterias, vending machines and other venues. Highlight and promote healthier and lower-calorie options.
3. Integrate nutrition education and promotion within worksite wellness programming. Incorporate the use of posters, handouts, or other visuals that offer dietary guidance calorie charts, relating calorie needs based on height and weight, and expenditure charts that show calories burned with sitting, standing, taking the stairs, or other

physical activities. Help with self-monitoring if people want to track their intake and output. Help them find/use an easy convenient paper or online diary.

4. Create nutrition standards for foods and beverages purchased for and offered in the workplace.
5. Consider food and beverage pricing that is more in line with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, pricing healthy foods lower and/or less healthy foods higher, so it is more economically feasible for employees to choose the healthy options.
6. Offer other incentives, prizes or financial rewards (coupons, gift cards, wellness points, etc.) for employees to eat in a healthy way.
7. Promote healthy lifestyles and environments in the workplace that allow for increased , regular physical activity, healthy food and beverage choices, and changes in the work environment that encourage healthy behaviors and promote occupational safety and health.

The American Heart Association supports robust nutrition standards for foods and beverages purchased for the workplace. These procurement standards should adhere to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the Diet and Lifestyle Recommendations of the AHA.^{ii,iii}

Recommended Nutrition Standards for Procurement of Foods and Beverages

General Guidance for Foods:

Prioritize:

Fruit – fresh, frozen, canned in own juice or water with no added sugar

Vegetables – fresh, frozen, canned (in very low sodium).

Seafood, fish (especially oily fish such as salmon, trout, sardines, tuna, and pollock)

Lean meats (no more than 10% fat by weight). Minimize processed meats; if offered, use only lower-sodium (no more than 480 mg per 2 oz.) options. Serve poultry without skin.

Fat-free or low-fat dairy products (1% or less)

Pasta, rice, breads, cereals, snack foods (chips, crackers, cereal bars, etc.)- Offer whole-grain, high-fiber options (whole grain is first or second ingredient; 2 grams or more of fiber/serving) when available

Unsalted nuts, seeds (and the butters and pastes derived from these like peanut butter or almond butter).

Beans, Peas, and Legumes (ex. hummus made from garbanzo's/chick peas, edamame, or snow peas).

Prioritize healthy oils (such as canola, olive, sunflower, soybean, safflower)

Limit fried foods. Prioritize roasted, baked, microwaved, steamed, poached, or grilled preparation

Limit foods with added sugars.

Reduce portion sizes as a way to reduce calorie intake. Choose the lowest serving size when possible or offer half serving sizes.

Low-fat/Low calorie condiments such as mustard, chutney, relish, light mayonnaise, fat-free dressings, oil-based dressings, salsa, ketchup, light (low sodium) soy sauce, horseradish, Tabasco.

Beverages

Water (including sparkling, seltzer, or flavored water)

100% fruit juice (≤ 180 kcal/12 oz. serving) with no added sweeteners

No or low calorie beverages (≤ 10 kcal/8 oz. serving) Mid-calorie beverages (light juices, teas, and other drinks with no more than 66 calories/8 oz.

Fat-free or low-fat ($<1\%$) milk; if flavored, no more than 150 calories/8 oz.

Regular and herbal unsweetened teas (hot or cold)

Coffee (with $<1\%$ or lower fat milk or creamers as well as soy alternatives)

In vending machines, at least 50% of beverages offered should be water and no or low calorie options.

Specific Limits:

In addition to the dietary guidance noted above, all foods must meet the calorie, sodium and saturated fat, and *trans* fat limits below.

Calorie limits –

*Snack foods, side dishes, desserts, single item foods: <200 kcal/serving

Entrees: <500 kcal/serving

Meals: <750 kcal

Sodium limits –

*Snack foods, side dishes, single item foods: <230 mg/serving

*Entrees: <480 mg/serving

*Meals: <600 mg

Saturated Fat limits:

*less than 10% saturated fat/serving

Trans Fat limits:

zero grams *trans* fat as labeled

* An entrée would be considered the main part of a meal such as a sandwich, pizza, or burger, whereas a meal is a more complete offering intended for breakfast, lunch, or dinner that includes two or more items from recommended food groups served in combination (e.g. lean meat + vegetable + fruit + whole grain bread).

ⁱ Carnethon M. Whitsel LP. Franklin BA. Kris-Etherton P. Milani R. Pratt CA. Wagner GA. Worksite wellness programs for cardiovascular disease prevention. *Circulation*. 2009; 120:1725-1741.

ⁱⁱ US Department of Health and Human Services, US Department of Agriculture. Dietary guidelines for Americans 2005. 6th ed. Washington, DC: US Department of Health and Human Services, US Department of Agriculture; 2005. Available at <http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2005/document/pdf/dga2005.pdf>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Lichtenstein AH, et al.. Diet and lifestyle recommendations revision 2006, *Circulation*. 2006; 114: 82-96.