



Seven Simple Steps to Get Started

Improving the health of your workplace may seem like a daunting task. Start with attainable goals, evaluate your efforts, and make adjustments over time to keep improving. Here are seven easy ways to start improving your food environment:

1	Reduce and ultimately eliminate regular soft drinks and sugar-sweetened beverages.	5	Switch to whole-grain bread and bread products.
2	Offer at least one fruit and/or vegetable serving with every meal.	6	Serve fruit instead of traditional desserts.
3	Do not serve butter.	7	Do not serve fried foods.
4	Reduce and ultimately eliminate candy in vending machines.		

Creating a Culture of Healthy Eating

- Lead by example. When organization leaders support and model healthy eating, it makes a powerful statement.
- Sign a pledge or commitment and post it prominently in a common area where employees and visitors can see it. *(See [Healthy Workplace Food and Beverage Pledge](#).)*
- Communicate to your employees that you care about their health and well-being. Provide education and resources about healthy living and eating. Help your workers understand why your workplace is making an effort to provide healthier food and beverages. *(See [Sample Email to Employees](#).)*
- Identify and use vendors who provide healthier foods and beverages.
- Recognize employees and departments that step up as leaders in promoting healthier choices.
- Share your commitment with other leaders in your community. Challenge them to lead by example, too.
- Select healthy foods when you dine with colleagues and employees.

How to Implement This Guidance in Your Workplace

- Get leadership approval and engagement.
- Work with staff from human resources, facilities, operations, meetings and other relevant departments. Review sections of the toolkit most relevant to each group.
- Consult with external partners as needed. This may include food and beverage vendors, a registered dietitian or nutritionist, unions, your insurance company, workplace wellness specialists, your local American Heart Association and other nutrition advocates.
- Assess your current food environment and any existing policies and vendor contracts.
- Create an action plan and timeline. Determine which changes can be made immediately and which will be made in the future.
- Draft policies (if needed).
- Work with vendors and staff to implement changes.
- Communicate specific changes and new policies to employees.
- Monitor, evaluate and communicate results.

Office Food

“Office food” refers to food in the workplace that is often:

- Provided at no cost to employees.
- Available in a common area on a “help yourself” basis.
- Purchased or made by employees.

Examples include leftovers from catered events, snacks brought in by employees and special occasion foods. Office food can be a challenge when you’re trying to

create a culture of health. It can encourage between-meal snacking and sabotage people who are trying to eat healthier or lose weight. Here are some recommendations to help manage the challenges of office food:

- When food is made available in a common area and employees are allowed to help themselves, limit the amount of time it is available. For example, it might be available 8:30–10:30 a.m. for breakfast items, or 11 a.m.–1 p.m. for lunch or snacks. After that time, put the food away.
- Explore other ways to celebrate special occasions besides providing unhealthy foods. Ideas include giving flowers to the honoree, offering fresh fruit or 100% fruit popsicles, holding a fun group activity off-site, taking a walking break, etc. Consider celebrating birthdays once a month instead of on each individual day.
- If there’s a potluck or sign-up list for employees bringing in food for a special occasion, make sure to suggest/include healthy options on the list. Consider a potluck build-your-own-salad bar with a variety of healthy fruits, veggies, toppings, dressings, etc.
- Avoid foods that tend to have high amounts of added sugars, fat and calories, such as donuts, cupcakes, brownies, muffins, pies, cakes, cookies and candy.
- Don’t place candy bowls in common areas. Replace candy with fresh fruit such as apples, oranges or plums.

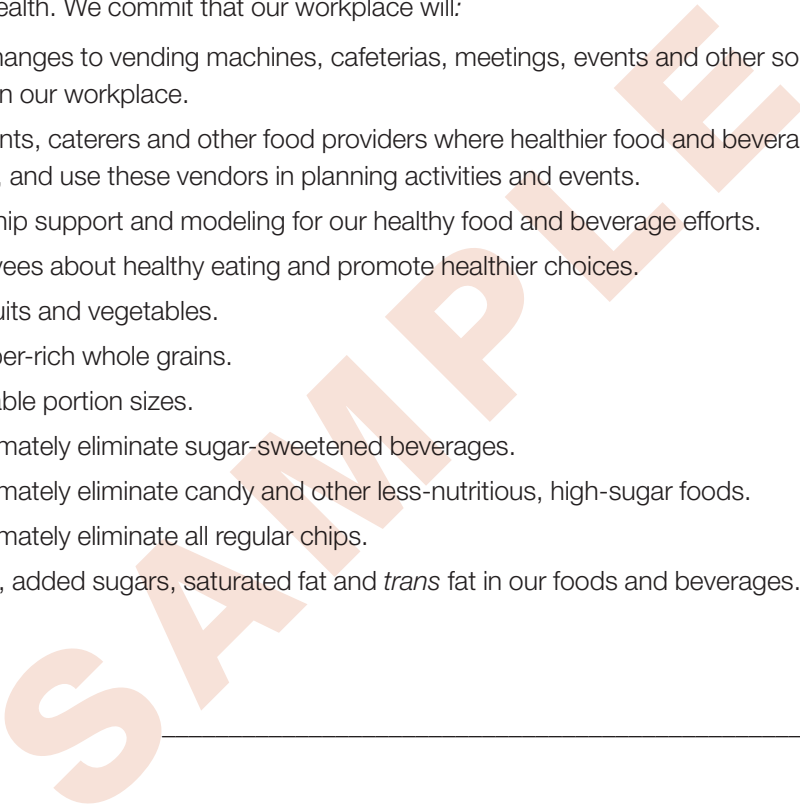
Be sure to communicate why you are making changes regarding foods allowed in your workplace. This will help gain employees’ support and acceptance. You may need to provide specific guidance so employees know what’s acceptable or preferred going forward.

This guidance is intended to help you provide healthier foods and beverages in the workplace, which is one component of creating a culture of health. It does not guarantee specific nutritional levels or health outcomes. Following or implementing this guidance does not constitute compliance with any specific American Heart Association program requirements.

Healthy Workplace Food and Beverage Pledge

_____ (NAME OF ORGANIZATION) _____ values the health of our employees and guests, and we want to create a culture of health. We commit that our workplace will:

- Make healthy changes to vending machines, cafeterias, meetings, events and other sources of food and beverages in our workplace.
- Identify restaurants, caterers and other food providers where healthier food and beverage choices are readily available, and use these vendors in planning activities and events.
- Provide leadership support and modeling for our healthy food and beverage efforts.
- Educate employees about healthy eating and promote healthier choices.
- Provide more fruits and vegetables.
- Provide more fiber-rich whole grains.
- Provide reasonable portion sizes.
- Reduce and ultimately eliminate sugar-sweetened beverages.
- Reduce and ultimately eliminate candy and other less-nutritious, high-sugar foods.
- Reduce and ultimately eliminate all regular chips.
- Reduce sodium, added sugars, saturated fat and *trans* fat in our foods and beverages.



Signature(s)

Printed Name(s)

Title(s)

Date



Sample Email to Employees

TO: All Staff

FROM: [CEO OR OTHER SENIOR LEADER]

SUBJECT: Our Commitment to a Healthy Workplace

We value the health of each of our employees and want to provide an environment in which you can thrive. We are committed to fostering a culture of health in our workplace where healthy choices are the easiest choices. In the coming [WEEKS/MONTHS], we'll be making healthy changes to foods and beverages offered in vending machines, cafeterias, meetings and events.

With the help of our friends at the American Heart Association, we've committed to several ambitious goals, including:

- Reducing and ultimately eliminating sugar-sweetened beverages, candy and other non-nutritious foods.
- Reducing sodium, added sugars, saturated fat and *trans* fat in the food and beverages provided.
- Providing more fruits, vegetables and whole grains high in dietary fiber.
- Providing reasonable portion sizes.
- Identifying and using food vendors who offer healthier choices.

Making these changes will take time and cooperation. Our aim is not to take away personal liberties, but to create a healthier work environment that will benefit us all. We value your support and feedback during this transition process.

