



A healthy workplace is good for business

HEALTHY WORK ENVIRONMENTS

This fact sheet outlines the different physical settings or environments that impact on an employee's food choices while at work.

On-site facilities

For employees who spend most of their time at a dedicated worksite, adequate food preparation and storage facilities make it easier to eat well. To assist your on-site employees to eat healthily at work, consider the following ideas:

- If kitchen facilities are available in your workplace, ensure that storage facilities, preparation space and equipment are easily available and well maintained.
- Inexpensive food preparation equipment such as a toaster, toasted sandwich maker or microwave oven can allow employees to heat up meals brought from home, reducing reliance on takeaway options for lunch.
- If your workplace has a canteen or vending machine, ensure that healthier options are available and are reasonably priced. If your workplace does not have a canteen, consider whether you can collaborate with local shops to offer special discounts on healthy options.
- Consider providing a comfortable space for employees to eat.

Off-site and mobile settings

Many employees regularly work off site or in a mobile setting (e.g. in a truck). These environments can be particularly challenging for employees when they are trying to eat well.

Some of the specific challenges of working off site or in a mobile setting include:

- difficulty accessing cool water and fresh food
- reduced opportunities to regularly stop and eat
- difficulty storing food safely.



To assist your employees in off-site or mobile settings, consider:

- providing a drink bottle for employees to ensure they can access water
- offering solutions for safe food storage, such as eskies or chiller bags
- providing incentives to encourage employees to take regular breaks while off site or driving.



Hydration

Hydration is a major issue for all employees, regardless of whether they work inside, outside, are active or sedentary. Even mild dehydration can impair function and prevent employees from making the best use of their skills.

There are a number of ways you can help your employees to maintain adequate hydration throughout the day.

- Ensure that a sink with hot and cold water taps is readily accessible to employees.
- Allow your employees to have water bottles or cups at their desk or workspace.
- Provide an alternative water supply, such as a water cooler, if water quality at your work is not appropriate for drinking.
- If your workplace has vending machines, ensure that water is available and is prominently displayed at all times. For further information about having healthier products in vending machines, look at the downloadable resources available on the Healthier Options in Vending website at www.eatwelltas.org.au/hover
- Consider providing drink bottles for employees working off site or in mobile settings.

Breastfeeding

Returning to work after maternity leave can be a challenge for many mothers. A major issue is their ability to either breastfeed or express breastmilk at work. Supporting breastfeeding mothers is a simple initiative that actively promotes work/life balance and workplace productivity. The benefits of accommodating breastfeeding in your workplace include:

- a quicker return to work by employees after maternity leave
- improved retention of employees
- reduced sick leave and absenteeism due to the health benefits of breastfeeding for both mother and infant
- enhanced employee morale and commitment.

An open discussion between you and your employee (ideally before she goes on maternity leave) is important to address any fears she may have about returning to work.



Your workplace can help make the transition back to work easier, and support mothers to continue breastfeeding by:

- providing a comfortable, private and clean space for breastfeeding and expressing breastmilk
- ensuring refrigeration facilities are available nearby, so expressed breastmilk can be stored safely for later use
- being flexible where possible – women may need to take breaks during the day to breastfeed or express breastmilk; flexible start and finish times can make it easier for mothers to incorporate expressing into their day
- ensuring an employee isn't discriminated against if she continues to breastfeed upon return to work.

For additional information on creating a breastfeeding-friendly workplace, visit the Australian Breastfeeding Association website at www.breastfeeding.asn.au