

06A HEALTHY EATING

Key questions to ask

- Why should I promote healthy eating in my workplace?
- What can I do to promote healthy eating in my workplace?
- How do I know if our program has been a success?
- How have others done it?
- Where can I go for more information?



In this section of the Healthy Workplace Resource Toolkit, we look at how you can make healthy eating at work a priority.



WHY SHOULD I PROMOTE HEALTHY EATING IN MY WORKPLACE?

We spend about a third of our waking lives at work, so how we eat at work has a large influence on our overall health and wellbeing. For some employees, a significant proportion of their meals are provided through the workplace.

Healthy eating and food safety are fundamental aspects of a healthy lifestyle, and are therefore essential for the health and wellbeing of all employees. Good nutrition helps to maintain energy levels and concentration, contributes to overall wellbeing and assists in the prevention and management of chronic diseases such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some types of cancers.

Healthy eating at work can be a challenge. Some of the most frequently reported issues that employees face when trying to make healthier eating choices include:

- a lack of healthier foods available from cafes, canteens and vending machines
- the perceived additional expense of healthier options
- a lack of facilities to store or prepare food brought from home
- the challenges of workplace culture or regular social events, such as drinks or morning teas.

Through your health and wellbeing program, you have a great opportunity to support your employees by providing a work environment that makes healthy choices easy choices.

How can I keep food safe?

- In Australia, there are around 5.4 million cases of food-borne illness each year, leading to 2.1 million days of lost work.¹ For any business, this is a significant and potentially avoidable cost.
- The bacteria responsible for these illnesses need food, warmth, air and time to grow to numbers dangerous to human health. These factors are all controllable.
- If your workplace is providing food to employees, there are steps that you can take to minimise the risk of food-borne illnesses.

For more information on food safety in the workplace, download the following resource from this CD-ROM or from the *Good health. Good business.* website www.workcover.tas.gov.au/goodhealthgoodbusiness



Food safety in the workplace



A healthy workplace is good for business

WHAT CAN I DO TO PROMOTE HEALTHY EATING IN MY WORKPLACE?

A workplace can have a significant impact on the food choices made by employees, as the workplace itself can be a significant source of food.

A range of factors can influence an employee's overall food choices, including the facilities available in a workplace, the type and quantity of food that is supplied at cafeterias, at meetings and informal get-togethers, and even the choices of food provided through workplace fundraising.

For more information on healthy eating in the workplace, download the following resources from this CD-ROM or from the *Good health. Good business.* website at www.workcover.tas.gov.au/goodhealthgoodbusiness



Healthy work environments

This fact sheet covers the physical environments that influence your employees' food choices, and includes topics such as access to preparation and storage facilities, what to do in off-site or mobile settings, healthy hydration, and breastfeeding-friendly workplaces.



Healthy workplace catering

This fact sheet from the National Heart Foundation covers how to create a healthy workplace catering policy, including tips on selecting a caterer and suggested healthy foods.



Informal food supply

This fact sheet covers more spontaneous or social food-related settings and activities in your workplace, including shared morning teas or special occasion celebrations, fruit bowls, food pantries and honesty boxes.



Healthy fundraising

This fact sheet gives some healthy food and 'non-food' fundraising ideas for workplaces.



Healthy vending

The Healthier Options in Vending – Employer Resources (HOVER) project provides several useful resources on how to make your workplace vending machine cater to healthier options. Visit www.eatwelltas.org.au/hover for more information.



Food and nutrition policy

In some workplaces, having a policy around healthy eating is important. For help with developing your policy, download this template, which includes policy guidelines for cafes, canteens and kiosks, catering, vending and fundraising. The template also provides information about getting feedback from your employees.



Healthy workplace nutrition guidelines

For workplaces that are developing menus and on-site food options for employees, this fact sheet includes important and helpful guidelines around healthy food options.



A healthy workplace is good for business

WHAT CAN I DO TO PROMOTE HEALTHY EATING IN MY WORKPLACE?

The following table lists some example activities that encourage healthy eating in the workplace. Remember, it's a good idea to use a mix of activities that cover people, place and policy.

Examples of activities targeting healthy eating		People	Place	Policy
	Provide a food preparation, storage and eating space away from work areas, with facilities such as refrigerators, microwaves, cutlery and crockery		✓	
	Supply low-fat milk instead of full-fat milk		✓	
	Replace the biscuit or lolly jar with fresh fruit or vegetables		✓	
	Liaise with local provider(s) to take food orders from employees and deliver boxes of fresh fruit and vegetables		✓	
	Provide free or subsidised fresh fruit and vegetables in the workplace		✓	
	Display healthy eating information in appropriate places in the workplace (e.g. Australian Guide to Healthy Eating and Go for 2&5® resources)		✓	
	Develop regular communications on nutrition (e.g. healthy recipe of the week, nutrition tips, myth busting) and provide links to relevant websites	✓		
	Offer healthy food and drink choices at functions and meetings		✓	
	Use healthy food options for fundraising		✓	
	Promote local, state and national healthy eating events		✓	
	Provide water cooler(s) that all employees can access easily		✓	
	Establish workplace policies that promote and support employees to eat healthily, e.g. workplace healthy catering policy, vending policy, fundraising policy			✓
	Organise Diabetes Tas to provide an educational talk on healthy eating	✓		
	Organise Diabetes Tas to take employees on a food label reading tour at the local supermarket	✓		
	Organise practical nutrition workshops (e.g. cooking/food preparation courses)	✓		
	Include employees' families in education regarding nutrition, including providing information relevant to families and inviting families to nutrition information sessions	✓		
	Offer healthy food options in vending machines		✓	
	Arrange a mobile food service that offers healthy options		✓	
	Provide subsidies for the purchase of nutrition-related books, e.g. cookbooks	✓		
	Provide incentives and/or support (e.g. flexible time) for employee participation in off-site nutrition-related activities (e.g. participation in the Get Healthy coaching service)	✓		
	Change the menu in your workplace canteen to ensure that healthy options are available		✓	
	Provide a subsidised breakfast program for employees	✓		
	Create workplace gardens for fruit and vegetables		✓	



A healthy workplace is good for business



This symbol indicates an easy or low-resource activity.



This symbol indicates a more comprehensively resourced activity.

HOW DO I KNOW IF OUR PROGRAM HAS BEEN A SUCCESS?

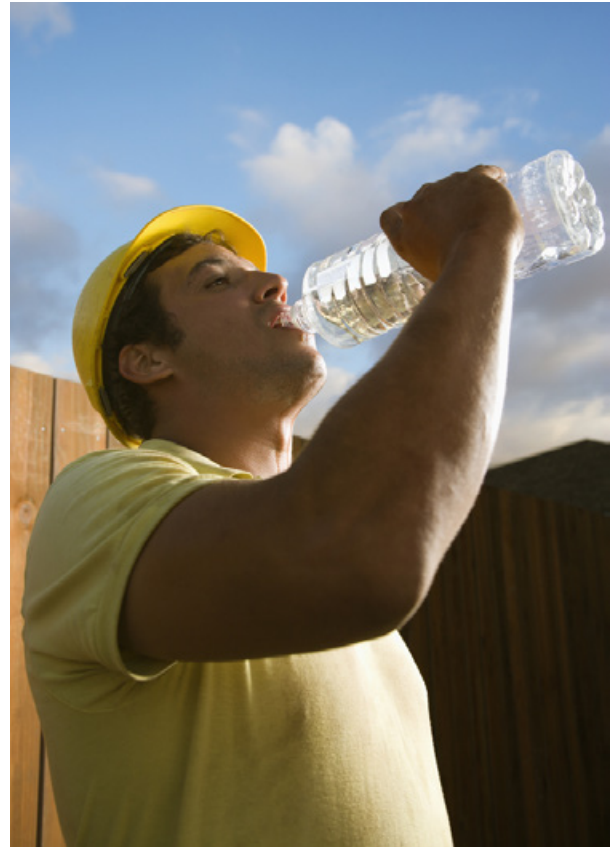
The best way to find out if your healthy eating activities have been a success is to look at the impact of any changes you have made to your worksite. It's a good idea to work out how you are going to do this early on, so you can ask the right questions and collect the right information.

It is essential to collect some information before you start, for example:

- If your workplace has vending machines: What percentage of employees currently utilise the machines? What products are stocked in the machines? (Assess products as green/amber/red). If you can access sales data, determine sales of healthy and less-healthy products.
- If your workplace has a canteen: What products are offered at the canteen? (Assess products as green/amber/red). What proportion of canteen sales are green, amber or red? What is the percentage of employees currently using the canteen? How satisfied are they with the current menu options?
- If your workplace provides catering at events: What food and drinks are currently offered?
- Perform a facilities assessment of your workplace (e.g. do employees have access to fresh water and somewhere to store food brought from home?)

This data will only be useful if it matches your program and its objectives. For example, if the majority of your employees work off site, then it's more important to assess what facilities they have access to while on the road, rather than assessing those in the office.

The baseline data you collect will be essential when you come to evaluate your program, as you can ask the same questions and see whether the figures are different. You will then be able to identify whether you need to change your activities to provide better support to your employees.



Asking the following questions will help you measure the impact of your healthy eating program:

- Is there understanding and acceptance of your food and nutrition policy (if you have one)?
 - Are employees aware of the policy and its requirements?
 - Do you have the right resources in place for employees to implement the policy (e.g. catering guidelines, fundraising resources)?
 - Is there employee support for the policy?
- Are your employees making good use of the support offered?
 - Are employees taking and using the healthy eating information available?
 - How many employees have participated in the healthy eating initiatives offered (e.g. utilised the fruit bowl)?



A healthy workplace is good for business

HOW DO I KNOW IF OUR PROGRAM HAS BEEN A SUCCESS?

- Can you see that employees have accepted the requirements of your policy and/or program?
 - Is there evidence of employees using the facilities provided (e.g. fridge, pantry, microwave)?
 - Is there evidence of employees following the policy requirements (e.g. requesting healthy options when ordering catering)?
 - What are employees saying about the changes that have been made (e.g. healthier catering, fruit bowl on offer)?
- What has been the effect of the program on employees?
 - Has the percentage of employees using the vending machine or canteen changed since implementation (needs baseline data)?
 - Has the availability of healthier food and drinks in vending machines increased?
 - What do your employees think about the program (e.g. do they think it has been effective)?

The way you collect this information will depend on your organisation's size and regional spread. There is a range of data collection methods that you could try, such as surveys, interviews and discussion groups.

For more information on evaluating your program, download the following resource from this CD-ROM or from the *Good health. Good business.* website at www.workcover.tas.gov.au/goodhealthgoodbusiness



A simple guide to evaluation



A healthy workplace is good for business

HOW HAVE OTHERS DONE IT?

Department of Police and Emergency Management, Tasmania

The Department of Police and Emergency Management (DPEM) employs approximately 1600 staff across Tasmania, comprising the Tasmania Police, State Emergency Service, Forensic Science Service and the Tasmanian Fire Service. The nature of work in many of these organisations involves shift work and duties away from normal food supply outlets, both of which are identified factors in influencing behaviours around healthy eating.

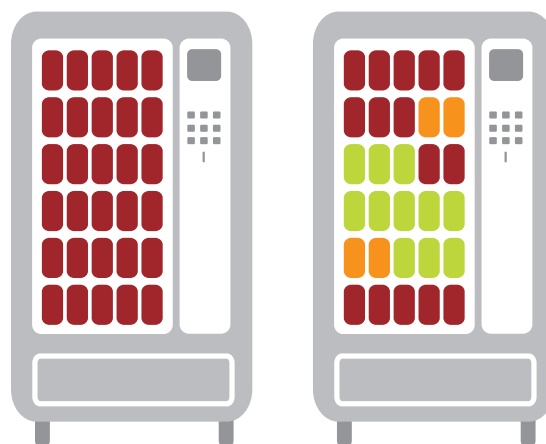
A project called *Good Fuel for Police* had previously been developed by the DPEM and the Department of Health and Human Services. Its aim was to learn about the factors that were influencing the nutrition choices and other lifestyle behaviours of DPEM employees.

One of the main barriers identified by *Good Fuel for Police* was the lack of healthy food options for shift workers outside of normal working hours. It was seen that many employees relied on unhealthy snacks from the on-site vending machine. The DPEM decided to move to healthier vending options, with support from Eat Well Tasmania and the Healthier Options in Vending-Employer Resources (HOVER) program.

The action plan to implement HOVER within DPEM involved:

- evaluating the existing vending machine contents
- introducing a vendor with the capacity to provide healthier vending
- providing support in the transition stages.

The following diagrams show the change from the original traditional vending machine containing 100% of foods classified as 'red' (foods high in energy, saturated fat and sodium) to a machine with healthier products classified as 'green' or 'amber' (foods that are higher in nutritional value, contain less saturated fat, salt and sugar, and are lower in energy). The new vending machine now has a ratio of 47% red, 17% amber and 36% green foods.



Pre-healthier vending

Post-healthier vending

Introducing some healthier options in the vending machine has reduced the overall energy and saturated fat content of the products by more than half.

The response to the healthier vending options has been very positive. The DPEM now intends to implement healthier vending in key police stations throughout Tasmania.

'The new vending machine with the healthy options is fantastic – in the first few weeks we sold out of several healthy products, and have had trouble keeping up with demand. Everyone has commented on the taste and variety of new products and the uptake has been excellent.'

– Mike Cosgrove
Manager, Human Resources, Department of Police and Emergency Management



A healthy workplace is good for business

WHERE CAN I GO FOR MORE INFORMATION?

There are several organisations that can help you access specific information related to healthy eating.

For a list of these organisations, their contact details and the services they provide, download the following resource from this CD-ROM or from the *Good health. Good business.* website at www.workcovertas.gov.au/goodhealthgoodbusiness



Where to go for more information -
Healthy eating

REFERENCES

- 1 Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing 2005, *Foodborne illness in Australia*, Canberra, Australia www.health.gov.au

