

EAT SMART AT WORK

WHY OUR FOOD CHOICES ARE SO IMPORTANT

What we eat directly and indirectly affects our physical and mental well-being. Just like you chose what gasoline to put into your car, the fuel you put into your body will determine how efficiently your “machine” will perform and for how long.

Healthy eating can help to prevent chronic diseases and conditions such as heart disease, stroke, some cancers, diabetes, high blood pressure, arthritis, osteoporosis, high cholesterol and depression. Plus eating a healthy and balanced diet, while incorporating physical activity, will help maintain a healthy body weight.

The well-being of your employees is essential to maintain a productive and successfully operating business. Let’s take steps to enhance the health of our employees at your worksite by helping them eat smart. Here are some ideas and suggestions on implementing several options.

This can be done during the month of September, which is Fruits & Veggies – More Matters Month. But it can also be incorporated any time because it is such an important aspect of our overall health and well-being.

Please take a few minutes to read through some of the ideas listed on ways to get across the message of Eat Smart At Work. Let me help you plan and implement some that you feel would fit your municipality. Healthy employees = healthy bottom line.



EAT SMART... BE HEALTHY!

SOME WAYS WE CAN PROMOTE AND ENCOURAGE HEALTHY EATING AT WORK OR AT HOME

VEGETABLE OR FRUIT OF THE WEEK

Pick a new vegetable or fruit each week to feature:

- post information on its origin
- post it's nutritional value
- offer a recipe to try featuring this produce



GROCERY STORE DIETITIAN

- Schedule on on-site presentation from with a Dietitian
- Some Shop Rite's and Wegman's offer this service
- Can provide tips on shopping smart
- Educate on how to prepare a meal plan
- Give ideas on ways to prepare healthy snacks.

RECIPE EXCHANGE

- Use an existing bulletin board or open wall space or create a unique "Wall of Wellness" to start and maintain a recipe exchange.
- Post one a week or several that employees are free to copy and try.
- Offer a recipe that fits a certain theme. For example, one week it might be "whole grains"; another week might be lean meats and protein; or meatless meals.
- Try to include culturally diverse recipes.
- Include vegetarian recipes or suggestions to substitute ingredients to make vegetarian alternatives.
- Make sure the recipes are healthy and come from a recognized health source.



BREAKFAST...BREAK THE FAST

After rising from a night's sleep, breakfast is the meal that can jump-start our energy level to meet the demands of the day. The word literally refers to breaking the fasting period of the prior night. Breakfast is linked to many health benefits, including weight control and improved concentration and performance.

Suggested ideas:

- Post the benefits of eating a healthy breakfast: weight control, better concentration, more strength and endurance to engage in physical activity, helps to keep insulin levels balanced to avoid highs and low energy surges, helps to lower cholesterol levels and more.
- Offer healthy breakfast options at a morning staff meeting
- Post suggestions on healthy grab and go breakfast ideas



SOME WAYS WE CAN PROMOTE AND ENCOURAGE HEALTHY EATING AT WORK OR AT HOME

BROWN BAG DAY...THE HEALTHY WAY

Encourage employees to bring their own lunch from home as a means to eat smart and achieve good health. Home made lunches typically help employees avoid the temptations, high fat and high sugar foods bought at a fast food restaurant or convenient store stop. It helps with portion control thus consuming fewer calories than if the meal was purchased elsewhere.



Action:

Adopt one day every week (if feasible) as “Brown Bag Day”. Invite employees to bring in a homemade lunch that day. You might want to combine the day with another activity such as outdoor eating or a short walk (weather is getting so nice), or encourage this during your staff meeting.

GUEST SPEAKER ON NUTRITION

- Wellness Director will arrange for a guest speaker from local healthcare provider to come in at whatever time is convenient for your staff.
- Typically the presentations run from 30-60 minutes depending on what works for your municipality.
- Might want to offer it as a “Lunch & Learn” and schedule it on one of your Brown Bag Days

MEL DVD PRESENTATION

Presenting information to employees using DVD is an easy and convenient means of conducting “Lunch & Learn” sessions.

- Start an information library where employees can sign out videos and DVDs or reference books, and pick up brochures and information

POTLUCK LUNCH

- Offer employees the opportunity to participate in a Potluck Lunch where each participating employees prepares a healthier version of their favorite dish.
- Encourage the use of fresh fruits and vegetables, substitute options for the “not so healthy” ingredients
- Each employee should try to provide nutritional value of the dish and share their recipe.
- Select judges (preferably someone who has not prepared a dish) and have them decide on the top winners perhaps based on taste, nutritional value and easiest to prepare.
- Prize ideas: kitchen gadgets, healthy cookbook, funny apron, gift cert to grocery store or voucher to local farmers market.



SOME WAYS WE CAN PROMOTE AND ENCOURAGE HEALTHY EATING AT WORK OR AT HOME

LOCAL RESTAURANTS

- Do your employees typically go to the same local restaurant or convenient store to pick up lunch? If the employees are limited in where they can go for lunch due to distance, availability or time constraints, perhaps you can collaborate with these frequent stops to offer even one healthy food choice at comparable or reduced prices.
- Share with employees a Fast Food Survival Guide which we can put together.
- Offer suggestions on some of the “healthier” choices at the local restaurant by giving them a nutritional comparison guide.
- Provide tips on how to ask for substitutions to a meal for instance replacing French fries with fresh fruit or a vegetable or small salad.
- Put out how many calories could be saved by drinking water instead of the usual soda or other sugary drink.
- By approaching the restaurants with this idea, perhaps they will realize that the municipality is serious about getting and staying healthy and would like to encourage the community to do the same.

OFFER A 5-A-DAY “CHALLENGE”

Challenge each of your department members to increase their intake of fruits and vegetables a day as part of Fruit and Veggies – More Matters Month in September.

- Information will be provided on the importance of fruits and vegetables in their diet.
- We will provide them with an easy to follow guide on what the challenge will be and how to get started.
- We will provide them with a personal score sheet to keep track of the amount of fruits and vegetables eaten each day
- To keep them motivated, we can send out weekly emails with tips on adding more vegetables and fruits into their diet, easy recipes, and motivational messages and quotes.
- Might want to offer the person or department who made the biggest improvement a free healthy lunch.

DRINKING WATER

- Post information on the importance of water
- Serve water at every meeting
- If you don't already have a water cooler, may want to consider installing one
- Replace some of the vending machine soda with bottled water. Suggest making the cost of the water less than the soda to encourage use.



SOME WAYS WE CAN PROMOTE AND ENCOURAGE HEALTHY EATING AT WORK OR AT HOME

FOOD DURING MEETINGS

If you do offer food/snacks during staff meetings, try to incorporate some healthy choices to show your employees that you are taking this serious and support their hard work to eat smart at work.



HONOR BOX OR VENDING MACHINE

If you have an “honor box” or vending machine or are considering installing one, be sure to make at least half of your selections healthy ones. I would be happy to speak with the vending service on your behalf.



STEVE CAPLAN