

Health Promotion and Wellness Programs

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Promoting Nutrition at NASA Centers**Purpose**

Work site nutrition education is an objective of Healthy People 2010 and NASA is committed to it. This bulletin provides NASA Occupational Health with guidelines for increasing awareness through education and creation of a work environment supportive of good health.

Nutrition plays a major role in employee health and well-being. Risk factors such as obesity, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol are strongly associated with dietary intake. Furthermore, five of the ten leading causes of death - heart disease, stroke, atherosclerosis, some cancers and diabetes - have been linked to nutrition.

Creating a work environment supportive of sound nutrition practices is essential to employee health and continued productivity. As productivity is sustained, moral improves.

Program Implementation

Educational opportunities that result in behavioral modification are long lasting if they are supported at home and at work. For example, by providing healthy food selections in cafeterias and the vending machines an employee can adhere to a healthy dietary regime.

To enhance programmatic ownership and Center wider involvement, formation of a Center employee committee is strongly recommended. Committee membership should include representatives from different employee groups, including management and union personnel and the food service vendor Contracting Officer Technical Representative (COTR). The committee shall tailor the agency plan to meet the needs of their employee population along with a pre-established set of programmatic goals and objectives, promotional strategies, an implementation schedule, and metrics to evaluate plan's reach and effectiveness.

Awareness and Education

To increase nutrition awareness and its relationship to health, the following methods are recommended:

- Posters
- Newsletters
- Nutritional labeling of cafeteria foods at the point of service

- Brochures
- Pamphlets
- Bulletin boards
- The Center intranet, the internet and the ohp website, www.ohp.nasa.gov
- Health Fairs
- Observance of the National Nutrition Month with associated incentive programs
- Support Groups

Nutrition education classes can focus on knowledge and/or skills development. Knowledge based classes may be composed of self-paced materials, educational sessions such as Lunch ‘n Learn, and videos with a single topic of discussion such as Understanding the Food Pyramid. Skill based classes provide applicable tools to make positive behavioral changes. These programs may use demonstration techniques or assessment tools such as diabetes risk self-assessment.

Environmental Support

A supportive work environment creates structure to maintain behavioral change since 2/3 of our awake time is spent at work. Furthermore, a supportive work environment embraces an organizational culture that is cognizant of employee health and productivity. For example, a simple change in the cafeteria menu has the potential to reach a large employee population and to positively assist those who have either modified their dietary intake or are ready to make the change. Support groups for weigh loss, diabetes and smoking cessation have proven also effective in behavior modification. Providing an opportunity for work site support groups to be established is essential.

Food Recommendations

Collaboration between the food service vendor COTR and the Occupational Health Services is essential. The following list serves as minimum requirements for the food services vendor in meeting NASA’s commitment to Healthy People 2010:

1. Provide a variety of low-fat, low sugar, low sodium, and high fiber healthy choices in the cafeteria. Minimum requirements include the following:

Food Service Nutrition Checklist

		Requirements/Suggestions
Bread	<input type="checkbox"/> Cereal	Low in sugar, High in fiber
	<input type="checkbox"/> Bread, Rolls, Bagel	Whole grains
	<input type="checkbox"/> Rice, Pasta	
Fruit	<input type="checkbox"/> Fresh Fruit	Raw, canned without sugar, lite
	<input type="checkbox"/> Fruit Juice	Unsweetened
Dairy	<input type="checkbox"/> Milk	Fat-free or 1-2%
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yogurt	Low fat, Low sugar
	<input type="checkbox"/> Cottage Cheese	1%

Fats	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cheese	Low or reduced fat
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Margarine	Low fat, whipped
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mayonnaise	Low fat or fat free
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Salad Dressing	Low fat
Protein	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cold Cuts	Low-fat, AHA Healthy Choice
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tuna	Water packed
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fish	Baked, broiled, poached
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Meats	Lean cuts
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Poultry	Without skin
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Beans	Fresh, dried, frozen, reduced sodium canned
Vegetables	<input type="checkbox"/>	Vegetables	Frozen, reduced sodium canned
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Salad Bar	

2. Offer healthy choices for catered meetings or Agency sponsored events.
3. Offer one healthy hot entrée with a total fat content of less than 30% of total calories, saturated fat of less than 8-10% of calories, cholesterol of less than 150 mg and sodium of less than 1000 mg.
4. Provide nutritional labeling at the point of service for all hot entrée selections including the total calories, % of calories from fat, total fat, total saturated fat and cholesterol.
5. Label low-fat and high fiber selections offered at salad, soup and sandwich bars at the point of choice.
6. Utilize products certified as “heart healthy” by the American Heart Association (AHA).
7. Modify recipes to lower content of overall and saturated fat, cholesterol and sodium.
8. Modify food preparation by using cooking methods that do not add fat, i.e., baking, broiling and boiling, trimming fat from meat, removing skin from poultry and minimizing the use of gravy and sauces.
9. Promote selection of healthy food choices by using a theme such as “Healthy Heart” or other nutritional campaigns.
10. Post a permanent display of nutrition information including the Food Pyramid and Dietary Guidelines for Americans.
11. Offer low calorie (100 calorie packages), low fat, low sugar, and high fiber snacks in the Centers’ vending machines. Recommended choices are:

Vending Machines Checklist

- Dried fruit
- Ice tea, unsweetened
- Juice, unsweetened fruit
- Microwave popcorn, plain
- Milk, skim or low-fat
- Nuts, such as almonds and walnuts
- Raisins
- Soda, diet
- Sunflower seeds, unsalted
- Water, bottled

Program Evaluation

Evaluating the impact of nutrition promotion is an essential component of the overall health promotion program. In the planning stage, the short and long term program goals shall be established and metrics identified. They may include:

1. Process evaluation measures such as types and number of activities and participation rates.
2. Impact/Outcome evaluation measures which may include % participants who complete a particular program or class in addition to a 6 to 12 month follow up call, employee satisfaction survey, an assessment of cognitive knowledge by providing mini quizzes at the end of class presentations such as Lunch 'n Learns.

Resources

Many on-line and print resources are available and some have been linked to the OHP website at www.ohp.nasa.gov. The following is a much abbreviated list:

American Heart Association www.americanheart.org

American Medical Association www.ama-assn.org

National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute www.nhlbisupport.com

American Dietetic Association www.eatright.org

United States Dairy Association www.usda.gov