



Our food choices, physical activity, lifestyle and environment all affect our health. So much of our time is spent in meetings, workshops, conferences, presentations, seminars and catered events. They become part of our worksite reality. For these functions, we can model our commitment to wellness by (1) providing healthy food choices and (2) by including opportunities for physical activity.

Healthy eating does **NOT** mean that everything served has to be low fat, low sodium and sugar less. It **DOES** mean that choices and options are offered. Consider the following:

➤ **Is there enough variety and choices over the course of the day(s)?**

It takes a variety of foods to get the energy, protein, vitamins, minerals, and fiber we need everyday. Colors, textures and aromas all add to the sensory pleasures of eating. Offering choices and options is a key to meeting diverse needs.

➤ **Have smaller portions of foods high in sugar, salt and fat, and larger portions of foods lower in fat and calories?**

Try offering smaller portions of foods higher in sugar, salt and fat such as mini muffins, mini doughnuts, and mini cookies. For main dishes, consider having plant foods as the foundation with meat as a garnish such as stir-fries and salads. Offer larger portions of foods lower in sugar, salt and fat like whole fruit, bagels with jelly, summer rolls, and rice balls as choices and options.

➤ **Are lower fat, salt and sugar options available?**

There are foods naturally low in fat, salt and sugar. Lower fat, salt and sugar versions of many foods are also available. How about tortilla chips with bean dip and salsa, pretzels and popcorn, or reduced-fat cookies and crackers?

➤ **Are fruits and vegetables offered?**

Fruits and vegetables are good choices. Check to make sure that dips and dressings are not high in fat. Try to use many colors, kinds, and forms (fresh, frozen, canned, dried) of fruits and vegetables. Do you have fruit and vegetables that are colors of the rainbow?

➤ **Are locally produced options offered?**

Consider offering local produce to support our local economy.

➤ **Is water offered as a beverage?**

Water is the essential nutrient, so drink it often. Cool, clear water has fast become the crowd favorite, so offer it with all meals, snacks and breaks.



➤ **Are enough breaks offered with opportunities for physical activity?**

Physical activity is probably not what comes to mind when we think of meetings. Long periods of sitting and listening can have an effect on energy and attention levels and enthusiasm can wane. Have “activity” breaks like stretching, walking discussion sessions, songs and dances, or discovery learning hunts. There are many simple strategies, just be creative.

➤ **Are choices available for indicated special needs and preferences?**

Have a variety of foods available to meet common preferences and special needs. Consider having vegetarian choices available for all meals and snacks. Include a question about special dietary needs on the registration form. Buffets offer creative opportunities to include choices for special needs and preferences. Work with the caterer.

➤ **Is safe food handling practiced?**

Cleanliness is essential when handling food. Wash your hands with soap and water and surfaces often. To serve food safely, keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold. Keep vermin and pests like flies, ants, roaches and other critters out of all food.

➤ **Are whole grain choices available?**

Foods made from whole grains offer many possibilities. Combine them, offer them in new ways, or include historical ethnic versions. Try adding 2-3 whole grain cereals to a trail mix, have sandwiches with whole grain, offer whole grain tortillas rollups, or try a whole grain barley squash soup.

➤ **Are whole foods (closest to the form found in nature) available?**

Offer foods in their natural, unprocessed form. For example, fresh apples are in their “whole” form that nature gave us. Applesauce and apple juice are more processed while flavored apple products may contain no real apples.

➤ **Are the foods visually appealing and tasty?**

Check foods offered for visual, aroma and taste appeal. How we enjoy foods includes all of our senses.

➤ **Consider not offering food at mid-morning or mid-afternoon meetings, presentations and seminars... offer only beverages... water... physical activity break instead??**

We are surrounded by food; We live in a food-saturated environment. With the increasing rates of overweight and obesity, we may want to consider whether it is necessary to provide food at meetings, presentations and seminars, especially for mid-morning and mid afternoon breaks.

Consider having physical activity breaks with water as the only beverage. We can try to create a “norm” that food does not have to be central to everything.



HEALTHY MEETINGS CHECKLIST

Use the “checklist” below for planning your next meeting, workshop, or conference. Take notes for sharing and for future events. Use it when planning with caterers.

- | | YES | NO |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| ➤ Is there enough variety and choices over the course of the day? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ➤ Are fruits and vegetables offered? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ➤ Are locally produced foods offered? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ➤ Are lower fat, salt and sugar options available? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ➤ Is water offered as a beverage? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ➤ Are enough breaks offered with opportunities for physical activity? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ➤ Are choices available for indicated special needs and preferences? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ➤ Is safe food handling practiced? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ➤ Are whole grain choices available? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ➤ Are whole foods (closest to the form found in nature) available? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ➤ Are the foods visually appealing? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

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