

Healthy choices for vending machines

Do employees at your workplace rely on vending machines for snacks, beverages or meals? Have you considered how nutritious the choices available are?

Workplace vending machines can be a convenient way for employees to grab a quick snack or meal when needed. However, workplace vending machines often provide snack foods such as chips, chocolate bars and soft drinks. These foods tend to be high in sugar, fat and/or salt and offer little nutritional value. Since many Canadian adults spend a large portion of their day at the workplace, employers can play a key role in promoting healthy eating. One way to do this is to offer healthier vending machine options.

Vending trends

- Many vending operators have responded to consumer demand for healthy foods by increasing the selection of healthy vending options
- Offering healthy choices can increase sales from health conscious consumers

Healthy vending machine suggestions

Beverages

- Water
- 100% fruit juice
- Vegetable juice
- Diet soft drinks
- 2%, 1%, skim milk and chocolate milk

Non-refrigerated food

- Whole grain crackers
- Pretzels
- Canned fruit
- Baked chips, soy crisps
- Cereal bars
- Fruit bars
- Low-fat cookies (e.g. fig newtons)
- Nuts, peanuts
- Dried fruit
- Trail mix
- Cereal boxes
- Healthy soup or chilli in a cup

Refrigerated food

- Fresh fruit cup
- Whole fruit
- Vegetable sticks
- Salads with low-fat dressing on the side
- Low-fat cheese
- Yogurt
- Hummus or other dips and crackers
- Sandwiches made with whole grain bread and lean meat



Steps to making your vending machine healthier

- Find out who is responsible at your workplace for the vending machines
- Set up a meeting with this person and your vending operator to discuss options
- Survey employees about preferences for healthy options. This may contribute to the success of your efforts
- Invite one or more of your employees to the meeting and/or consider creating a vending machine committee
- Consider inviting a registered dietitian from your local health department to attend the meeting
- Decide how many healthy vending items you would like to offer. Offering 25% healthy vending items is a good starting point
- Gradually increase the percentage of healthy vending items available to 50% or more
- Decide on specific healthy vending items to be offered (see other side for ideas)
- Let your employees know about the new vending items:
 - Send out a memo
 - Post a newsletter on your website
 - Promote healthy eating!
- Identify healthier vending machine options so employees can easily find them:
 - Place healthy food at eye level
 - Place a symbol (e.g., a star or checkmark) next to healthy choices or colour code the food item to indicate the healthy choice (remember to include a legend to define symbols/colours)
- Price healthy vending items at the same price, or lower, than other vending items
- Monitor inventory to track how well healthy vending items are selling
- Get employee feedback
- Consider creating a vending machine policy to ensure that healthy choices are always available

Promote healthy eating!

Vending machines can provide healthy choices. By working together with your employees, vending operator and registered dietitian from your local health department, you can create a workplace environment that promotes healthy eating.

Produced and distributed by Nutrition Services, York Region Community and Health Services Department. www.york.ca/nutrition. Revised 2017. May be reproduced without permission provided source is acknowledged. To speak to a Registered Dietitian call EatRight Ontario at 1-877-510-5102.

