



Tips for Healthy Events

A variety of food options can be provided at workplace or community events. The tips below encourage healthier food choices. Ask yourself these questions when planning your next meeting, workshop, or event.

Is it necessary to offer food at this event?

- Is the meeting being held during a meal time?
- Will the meeting run long enough to warrant a snack or food?

Are you offering water as one of your beverage choices?

- Water should always be offered if you are going to provide beverages.
- Try adding slices of fruit or vegetables such as lemon, lime, or cucumber.
- Save money by using large pitchers of ice and tap water.
- Avoid offering soda, juice, or other sugary drinks at meetings.

Are foods offered in appropriate portion sizes?

- Cut large bagels, muffins, or tortillas into halves or quarters.
- Use smaller cups and plates to promote appropriate portion sizes.
- <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/wecan/downloads/servingcard7.pdf>

Are fruits and vegetables included as part of your meal or snack?

- Fruits and vegetables make nutritious snacks and are quick and easy to prepare. Consider apples, oranges, grapes, carrots, sweet peppers and snap peas.
- Support your local farmer or market by using local produce, whenever possible.
- Save money by purchasing fruits and vegetables that are in season.
- Try to make fruits and vegetables more visually appealing with nice presentation.

Are whole grain choices available?

- Provide whole grain foods when possible. The word “whole” wheat (corn, oats, etc.) should be the first item on the ingredient list.
- Whole grains contain more nutrients and are more filling.
- Here are some examples: try whole wheat breads, bagels, tortillas, wraps, pita bread, or crackers rather than the refined grain versions of these products.



Have you considered the dietary needs or preferences of those who might have food allergies or special dietary requests?

- Ask participants beforehand if they have any food restrictions or allergies.
- Consider vegetarian options for popular dishes like chili or soups.
- Consider labeling foods with allergens, such as salad with eggs or trail mix with nuts.
- Ninety percent of food allergic reactions are caused by these foods: milk, eggs, fish, shellfish, nuts (including peanuts, walnuts, and others), wheat, and soy.

Have you considered incorporating breaks that include voluntary or structured physical activity?

- Plan for some physical activity when possible, especially working with children.
- Incorporate movement as much as possible into your event. Encourage standing and make higher tables available for those who prefer to stand.
- Try this website for some quick and easy activity ideas: www.gonoodle.com

Are you using safe food handling practices?

- Remember the four basic steps for safe food handling. 1) Clean: wash hands and surfaces often; 2) Separate: don't cross contaminate; 3) Chill: refrigerate promptly; 4) Cook: cook to proper temperatures.
- Minimize bare hand contact with foods. Use tongs, spatulas, single serving containers and toothpicks to serve food.
- Discard perishable foods that have been sitting out for 4 hours or longer.

**Have you tried making a recipe healthier by making ingredient substitutions?
(eatsmart.ext.vt.edu)**

- Offer low-fat or fat-free milk and dairy products as opposed to whole fat choices.
- Flavor your dishes with spices, herbs, or citrus instead of salt.
- Substitute ingredients that are nutrient rich alternatives, such as rolled oats for breadcrumbs, or plain low-fat yogurt for mayonnaise.
- Include a variety of protein foods, including seafood, lean meats and poultry, eggs, legumes (beans and peas), nuts, seeds, and soy products.

Are foods that are lower in saturated fat, salt, and sugar available?

- Look for foods that are lower in sugar, salt, and saturated fat. Serve popcorn instead of chips, yogurt instead of ice cream, or fresh fruit instead of cakes and cookies.
- If you offer foods higher in sugar, salt, and saturated fat, keep the portions smaller.
- Offer mixed dishes with lots of vegetables such as stir-fries or salads.