

Meeting Well



A Tool for Planning Healthy
Meetings and Events

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This Meeting Well guidebook can help your organization plan meetings and events with good health in mind. From small working-lunch meetings to major company functions, this tool offers healthy ideas that will energize meeting participants and show them how easy it can be to live a healthier life. By using the resources available to you within the guidebook, you demonstrate your company's commitment to helping your employees stay well.





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A Healthy Balance: Good Nutrition and Physical Activity

The food you eat and the amount of physical activity you get every day directly affect your health. For a healthier life, eat more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, and eat less red and processed meat, high-fat dairy products, and foods high in calories and sugar. Eating well and being active will not only help you look good and feel better, it will also give you the energy you need to get through your busy days.

Whether your meeting lasts a few hours or a few days, the Meeting Well guidebook has been designed to make it easier for meeting participants to eat well and be active. Using this tool means that healthy food choices will always be available. It does not mean that all foods high in calories, fat, and sugar need to be completely eliminated from the menus you plan. The ideas and tips here will help your organization give meeting attendees a variety of food choices that can help provide a healthy balance all day. Because most meetings are arranged so that participants sit for long periods of time, this guidebook also offers a variety of opportunities to help you stay active all through the meeting. Activities can include games, dancing, group walks before the meeting, walks to dinner, or stretching at breaks.

Using the Meeting Well guidebook is just one way your company can demonstrate its commitment to the good health of your employees. Consider establishing policies that make healthy foods and opportunities for physical activity available to your employees. Use this tool to ensure that healthy vending and cafeteria items are available, and encourage exercise breaks throughout the day. By doing so, you send a key message to your employees: “We care about you and your health, and we’re committed to helping you get on the road to a healthier life.”





Making the Connection between Food and Mood

If you've become drowsy after eating a bagel for breakfast or a bowl of pasta for lunch, you know how the foods you eat affect the way you feel. Within 2 to 3 hours after eating high-carbohydrate foods, you tend to feel tired. On the other hand, eating foods high in protein helps you feel more alert and able to concentrate.

Below are some examples of high-protein and high-carbohydrate foods:

High-protein Foods

High-protein foods can help boost energy levels, keeping individuals more alert. To give them an added benefit, select protein options that are low in fat.

High-protein Foods:

- Shellfish and fish
- Chicken
- Turkey
- Lean ham or pork tenderloin
- Beans and peas
- Lean beef
- 1% milk
- Low-fat or fat-free yogurt
- Cheese

1. Offer low-fat protein options throughout the day, especially at lunch. Consider these examples:
 - Cereal with low-fat yogurt at breakfast
 - Grilled chicken salad at lunch
 - Seafood and pasta for dinner

2. Avoid serving only high-carbohydrate foods, especially during breaks. Consider these examples:

High-carbohydrate Foods

High-carb foods can make you feel tired. To lessen this effect, offer foods that also provide protein.

High-carb Foods:

- Cereals
- Breads
- Pasta
- Rice
- Couscous
- Other grains
- Potatoes
- Popcorn
- Crackers
- Chocolate
- Cookies
- Other sweets

Instead of:

Popcorn and pretzels
Tortilla chips and salsa
Crackers
Cookies and brownies

Try:

Popcorn and nuts
Tortilla chips, salsa, and bean dip
Crackers and cheese
Low-fat yogurt and fresh fruit

Although the foods you serve are an important part of keeping participants alert, enthused, and energized during meetings, they are only one piece of the health puzzle. Providing the right combination of foods and including physical activity complete the puzzle. To help your organization with ideas for building physical activity into your meetings, see “Action-packed Meetings” on page 12.





General Tips for Meals and Snacks

Simple changes to your meals and snacks can give your meeting attendees power-packed, disease-fighting nutrients – and give them the energy they need to stay alert all through the day.

Breakfast and Brunch

- Serve fruit and 100% fruit and/or vegetable juice.
- Offer 1% or low-fat milk and yogurt.
- Offer 1% milk in addition to half-and-half for coffee and tea.
- Offer whole-grain bread, rice, pasta, and cereals when possible.
- Offer mini-bagels and mini-muffins instead of the larger ones.
- Offer whole-grain toast, bagels, fruit breads, and muffins instead of doughnuts, biscuits, and pastries.
- Offer fruit spreads in addition to butter or margarine.
- Offer a variety of high-fiber cereals, such as bran flakes and low-fat granola.
- Offer raisins, dried fruit mix, fresh strawberries, bananas, blueberries, or sliced fresh peaches as a topping for hot and cold cereals, pancakes, waffles, and crepes.
- Offer vegetables, such as mushrooms, red peppers, onions, tomatoes, green peppers, and spinach, for omelet fillings or as additions to scrambled eggs.
- Limit high-fat meats such as bacon and sausage; opt for Canadian bacon or turkey/chicken sausage instead.
- Limit hash browns and other fried foods

Lunch and Dinner

- Offer whole-grain breads in addition to white.
- Offer salad dressings on the side, and always include a low-fat or fat-free option.
- Offer broth or vegetable-based soups instead of cream soups.
- Include fruit with every meal.
- Serve at least 2 vegetables with each meal, and season them with fresh herbs instead of butter or cream sauces.
- Add dried fruit such as cranberries, raisins, or apricots, to rice dishes.
- Serve pastas with pesto or sauces made from tomatoes or other vegetables, instead of cream sauces.
- Offer chicken, turkey, fish, and shellfish when possible.
- Limit red meat (beef, pork, and lamb) to 4-ounce servings.
- Include a vegetarian alternative for all meals.
- Choose steamed, poached, baked, and broiled meats instead of fried or sautéed.
- Avoid fried foods such as french fries, onion rings, and fried chicken.
- Request reduced-fat cheeses be used in all menu items requiring cheese, like vegetable lasagna.
- Offer fruit in addition to other desserts.
- Ask for small portions of high-calorie desserts.

During Breaks

- Offer 100% fruit and vegetable juices.
- Offer fruit and vegetable dips.
- Offer fruit smoothies or milk shakes made with low-fat frozen yogurt.
- Offer tortilla chips with bean dip and salsa.
- Offer hard or soft pretzels with mustard, or popcorn and trail mix.
- Offer fresh fruit and cheese kabobs.
- Consider not having food at every break.





Meetings at the Office and Potluck Events

You just never know what is going to show up at a potluck event. To help avoid the “all dessert, no main dish” syndrome, suggest dishes from the lists that start below and continue through page 9. Offer suggestions for fruit, vegetable, and grain dishes on the sign-up sheet, and make sure to leave room for vegetarian dishes. If your participants need a little incentive, offer small prizes for healthy dishes such as “Best Use of a Grain” or “Most Creative Fruit and Vegetable Platter.” If your potluck requires breakfast, lunch, or snacks, many of the items on the list are available at your local grocery store.

Breakfast Suggestions

- Fruit salad
- Whole fruit
- Low-fat yogurt
- Mini-bagels with a variety of flavored low-fat spreads
- 100% fruit juice
- Mini-boxes of whole-grain cereal and fresh fruit

Appetizers

- Raw vegetables and low-fat dip
- Pretzels, baked tortilla or potato chips, popcorn
- Reduced-fat cheese assortment with whole-grain crackers
- Baked tortilla chips, bean dip, and salsa
- Hummus and pita bread
- Baked artichoke dip made with low-fat mayonnaise served with whole-grain crackers
- Roasted red peppers on thinly sliced Italian bread
- Spinach dip made with low-fat mayonnaise and/or sour cream in a pumpernickel or wheat bread bowl

Salads and Side Dishes

- Mixed greens salad with low-fat dressing
- Whole-wheat rolls and dinner bread
- Fruit salad
- Spinach salad with mandarin oranges and toasted almonds
- Red potato salad made with low-fat mayonnaise and/or sour cream
- Tomato salad with artichoke hearts, onions, black olives, mint, and oregano
- Three bean salad
- Corn salad with red and green peppers
- Pasta salad made with low-fat dressing
- Rice or couscous with dried fruit and/or vegetables
- Bell peppers stuffed with Spanish rice or corkscrew pasta





Main Dishes

- Chili and soup
- Turkey sandwiches on whole-grain bread
- Vegetable pizza
- Chicken salad made with low-fat mayonnaise and chopped apples or grapes
- Vegetable-stuffed pita sandwiches with low-fat dressing
- Taco salad made with chicken
- Casseroles made with reduced-fat cheeses and lots of vegetables
- Vegetarian lasagna made with reduced-fat cheese

Desserts

- Fresh fruit salad
- Fresh fruit with chocolate and/or caramel dipping sauce
- Fruit cobbler
- Fruit pies
- Oatmeal raisin cookies
- Fig bars
- Frozen yogurt, sorbet, or reduced-fat ice cream
- Brownies made with applesauce instead of oil
- Carrot cake made with applesauce and pineapple
- Cake garnished with fruit purée

Why not place a bowl of fruit in the center of the table? It encourages healthy snacking, makes for a colorful centerpiece, and is a great replacement for the candy dishes you frequently see.

Multiple-day Meetings

If your meeting or conference is scheduled to last for more than a day, you probably will work with a caterer or a hotel chef to plan meals and snacks. It is likely that there are pre-set menus from which to choose the food. Ask what other companies making healthy food a priority offer during their meetings, and see if those suggestions are a good fit for your meeting. You can also request they add nutritional labeling to the food, so people can make the healthiest choices possible. Once you have selected the menu, confirm what you have ordered for your meetings is what gets served. Be available to the caterer in the event of last-minute changes. Finally, be sure to stress that you do not want the same foods served over and over again. (Attendees can only eat so much chicken.)

Consider these requests as you meet with caterers and chefs:

- Ask that fruits and vegetables be served with every meal and break (if you do decide to have food at breaks).
- Ask that whole-grain cereals, breads, rice, and pasta be used whenever possible.
- Ask for smaller portion sizes of foods such as bagels and muffins.
- Ask that fresh fruits always be available as a dessert option.
- Ask that other desserts be garnished with fresh fruit (berries go with just about anything) and that they be in smaller portions.
- Ask that sauces for vegetables, grains, and meats always be served on the side.
- Ask that high-fat salad ingredients – dressings, cheese, croutons, bacon bits – be served on the side.
- Ask if the kitchen staff can help reduce calories by using low-fat ingredients, adding less sugar, and preparing foods using lower-fat cooking methods, such as baking and broiling instead of frying.





10,000 Steps per Day ... A Step in the Right Direction

Pedometers are an excellent tool for motivating your participants to step toward better health. This device is designed to count the number of steps a person takes, and to help track the progress of physical activity goals.

Reaching a daily goal of 10,000 steps is equal to walking about 5 miles. By simply carrying out typical daily activities, most people average between 4,000 and 6,000 steps per day. Walking 10,000 steps per day requires a little more effort, especially when most of the time at meetings is spent sitting. To help individuals fit some additional steps into the day, try the following:

- Recommend participants take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Organize a walking group in the morning or when you break for dinner.
- Arrange for an early morning fitness class.
- Encourage people to walk during meeting breaks, or play music instead to inspire physical activity.
- Encourage people to walk to dinner or other forms of entertainment.

Action-packed Meetings

“Active” is probably the last word that comes to mind when you think of meetings. Sitting and listening to presenters session after session, day after day, can make your participants restless, make it harder for them to pay attention, and leave them feeling drained at the end. Whether you schedule a meeting a single full day or multiple days, incorporating activities that encourage people to get up and move should be part of your meeting agenda.

Use the tips on the next pages to infuse activity (and energy) into your meetings. Participants who are already active regularly will appreciate the opportunity to keep up their level of activity while attending the meeting. People who are not usually active will be able to see how easy it is to work physical activity into their day.

- Pick a meeting location that makes it easy and safe for participants to walk outdoors. If meeting attendees will be spending the night, look for places where they can walk to dinner, shop, hike, or enjoy other forms of active entertainment. Include this information in your pre-meeting materials.
- Select hotels that have an on-site fitness facility. If the facility charges a fee, negotiate this cost into the contract arranged with the hotel. Include information about the fitness facility in your pre-meeting materials.
- Provide participants with maps of nearby attractions and walking trails.
- Provide incentives for being active. Hand out forms for participants to keep track of minutes spent being physically active. Give prizes to people who are active at least 30 minutes each day of the meeting.





- Depending on your budget, give participants a pedometer and encourage everyone to walk at least 10,000 steps every day of the scheduled meetings. (See suggestions on page 11.) Give prizes to those who meet this goal.
- Offer early morning aerobics, yoga, or tai chi classes.
- Encourage participants to use the stairs instead of the elevator whenever possible. Place directional signs for the meeting near the stairwells and at the elevators pointing the way to the stairs.
- Play up-tempo music, and inspire people to move for 5 to 10 minutes before or during scheduled breaks.
- Offer dancing during dinners or evening receptions.
- Organize outings to local attractions, such as zoos or museums.
- Offer door prizes that emphasize physical activity, such as fitness club memberships, gift certificates for sporting equipment, athletic shoes or workout clothes, dance lessons, jump ropes, hand weights, pedometers, water bottles, gym bags, or fitness books.
- If you plan on eating out, find a local restaurant within walking distance.

“Active” Icebreaker

Sit Down If ...

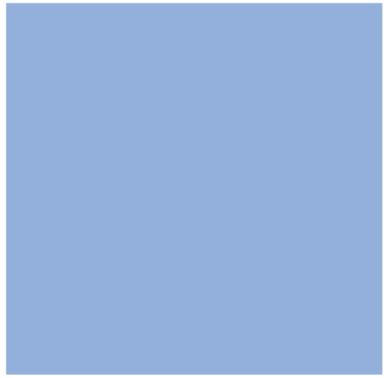
“Sit Down If ...” is an easy and fun way to kick-start your meeting and deliver some important health messages. Begin by asking all participants to stand up. As you read each statement, tell them to “sit down if” that statement applies to them.

Sit Down If ...

- You did not eat at least 2 1/2 cups servings of fruits and vegetables yesterday.
- You don't usually eat low-fat dairy products.
- You are more likely to eat white bread than whole-wheat bread.
- You've eaten “x” in the past week (e.g., double cheeseburger, supersize fries, king-size candy bar).
- You think consuming three alcoholic drinks a day does not affect a person's risk for cancer.
- You don't normally get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity activity per week.
- Your office is on the second or third floor, and you usually take the elevator.
- You think the following statement is true: You should get screened for colon cancer beginning at age 60.
- You think 50 is the minimum age women should start getting mammograms.
- You don't know your cholesterol level.
- You don't use sunscreen regularly.

If there is anyone left standing, give them a door prize – or at least a big round of applause!





Healthy Meeting Checklist

To ensure your meeting promotes good health to all participants, review the following:

- Have you included enough variety in healthy food choices throughout each meeting day?
- Are fresh fruits and vegetables included with each meal and snack?
- Will meals include whole-grain breads, cereals, rice, and pasta?
- Are there other choices for people who don't eat meat?
- Did you ask that food be prepared with low-fat ingredients and using low-calorie methods?
- Will food options be provided that are low in calories, fat, and sugar?
- Have you asked that sauces, dressings, and condiments be served on the side?
- Have you asked for smaller portion sizes of bagels, muffins, cookies, etc.?
- Did you ask about any special dietary needs participants may have?
- Have you built some form of physical activity into the meeting?

The Healthy Vending Machine

There are a variety of healthy food and drink choices available to stock your workplace vending machines. Consider establishing a company policy that requires at least 50% of the vending machine items be healthy options (i.e., foods lower in calories, fat, sodium, and added sugars). Consider labeling these as “better-for-you” choices to make it even easier for your employees to snack their way to better health. Ask your vendor to stock healthier vending machine choices such as these:

Foods

- Dried fruit (raisins, cranberries, apricots, apples, etc.)
- Peanuts, almonds, cashews
- Sunflower seeds
- Baked potato chips
- Pretzels
- Fat-free or reduced-fat microwave popcorn
- Trail mix
- Low-fat granola bars
- Whole-grain cereal bars
- Animal crackers
- Fig bars
- Reduced-fat cookies and crackers

Refrigerated Vending

- Fresh fruits
- Individually packaged chopped fruits and vegetables
- Low-fat or fat-free yogurt
- String cheese
- Sugar-free gelatin
- Fat-free pudding

Beverages

- 1% or fat-free milk
- 100% fruit and vegetable juices
- Diet soda
- Sugar-free lemonade
- Sugar-free iced tea
- Water





A Job Well Done!

Take time to congratulate yourself on a job well done, especially if this was your first attempt at making a “meeting well.” Promoting employee health is good for business, and the American Cancer Society wants to make that as easy as possible. By considering the well-being of your meeting participants, your organization is helping to reduce the likelihood of cancer, stroke, heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, and other chronic diseases.

The American Cancer Society encourages you to move forward and develop a nutrition and physical activity policy and procedure for your organization to help your employees stay well. We now know that healthy employees live longer, feel better, are more content and productive, require fewer sick days, and help keep health care costs down. Your organization can recognize that healthy lifestyles are as much a part of the workplace as the home, and commit to creating a workplace environment that supports healthy lifestyles. By adopting policies and procedures that increase employee knowledge and skills for healthy living, you are giving them the opportunity to practice these lifestyle changes every day.

For additional information, please contact the American Cancer Society at 1-800-227-2345.



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by helping you stay well, helping you get well,
by finding cures, and by fighting back.

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