

Guidelines for Healthy Meetings

Introduction:

We are experiencing an epidemic of obesity, and the role of food choices and physical activity in the prevention of many chronic and debilitating diseases is becoming more apparent. Employers, community groups and faith communities can make it easier for people to make healthy food choices by providing healthy food at meetings and other events they sponsor.

General Guidelines:

- Serve low calorie and low fat foods.
- Serve fruits and vegetables whenever possible.
- Serve small portions (e.g. cut bagels in halves or quarters, etc.).
- Serve milk (fat free or 1%), 100% fruit or vegetable juice, water or iced tea (unsweetened) instead of soft drinks.
- Lunch and dinner don't have to include a heavy dessert - fresh fruit, a fruit crisp or cobbler, small cookies, etc. are just fine. Offering a choice of a heavy dessert (large slice of cake, etc.) and a light one (fruit) often presents a difficult choice for guests. If you only have the light choice, very few people will notice the difference (and some might actually thank you for not making them choose).
- Include a vegetarian option at all meals.
- Provide reduced fat or low fat milk for coffee rather than cream or half and half (evaporated skim milk also works well for coffee - make sure it's not sweetened condensed milk).
- Healthy food certainly can taste good. Most food service professionals now have some familiarity with healthier food preparation options and are willing to accommodate requests for changes to their usual fare. You might want to ask for a sample ahead of time.
- Registration forms provide space to indicate food allergies or dietary restrictions.
- Provide pitchers and bottles of water.

Food Suggestions for Breaks (am & pm):

- Bagels with low fat cream cheese or jams (generally lower in fat and calories than cream cheese). Have the bagels cut in halves or quarters
- Fresh fruit - whole or cut up (with a yogurt dip)
- Whole grain muffins (cut in half if not serving mini muffins) and whole grain breads instead of Danish, croissants or doughnuts
- Low fat yogurt
- Pretzels, hot pretzels (cut in pieces) with mustard
- Lightly seasoned popcorn
- Graham crackers, fig newtons
- Dried fruit or trail mix
- Raw vegetables with low fat dip

Food Suggestions for Lunch/Dinner

- Include whole grain breads and rolls.
- Use low fat salad dressings and offer them on the side.
- Include low fat mayonnaise and mustard as a condiment for sandwiches, or cranberry sauce if you're offering turkey.
- Use a combination of low fat mayonnaise and plain yogurt for potato salads, etc., and dress such salads lightly.
- If sandwiches are made ahead of time, have them presented in halves, so people can take a smaller portion.
- Serve broth based soups (using a vegetarian broth), or make cream soups using evaporated skim milk instead of cream.
- Make pasta dishes (lasagna, pizza) with low fat cheeses (part skim mozzarella, part skim ricotta) or serve pasta with tomato or other vegetable based sauces.
- Limit meat servings to a 4 ounce portion and provide plenty of low fat, low calorie side dishes.
- Serve at least two vegetables with each meal, and avoid butter or cream sauces.
- Avoid fried foods.
- Provide raw vegetables or pretzels instead of potato chips or french fries.
- Include fresh fruit or fruit salad as dessert.

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Introduction:

We are experiencing an epidemic of obesity, and the role of food choices and physical activity in the prevention of many chronic and debilitating diseases is becoming more apparent. Employers, community groups and faith communities can make it easier for people to be physically active at meetings and other events they sponsor. Providing participants with a physical activity break at longer meetings and events will improve their ability to attend to the important subject being addressed.

Physical Activity Guidelines

- If possible, choose a location for your meeting where participants can easily and safely take a walk. If you are holding an overnight meeting, choose a place where participants can walk to dinner, evening entertainment, shopping, etc. rather than drive. Provide participants with maps of the area showing good walking routes.
- Choose a hotel that has good fitness facilities - a fitness room, a pool, etc. Include information about these facilities in materials you send to participants.
- Organize an early morning physical activity opportunity. The easiest thing to organize is a morning walk. Or, you can arrange for an early morning, low impact fitness class.
- Encourage participants to take the stairs. Place signs near the elevators telling people where the stairs are.
- Consider telling people that the dress code for the meeting is casual - this allows people to move around freely.
- Encourage networking by suggesting the people take a walk together and talk about their common interests.
- Schedule brief activity breaks in the a.m. and p.m. Have participants stand up and walk in place or have someone lead a stretching break. People will be better able to pay attention to the rest of the meeting.

Food Guidelines

The following are general guidelines to use when planning meals for meetings and other events. It is important to provide healthy food choices to help people eat well. We hope that this information will help you work with us to provide healthy meals to our participants.



General Guidelines:

Offer low calorie and low fat foods and/or small portions (e.g. bagels cut in halves or quarters). Always offer vegetables, fruit and low fat milk. Include a vegetarian option at all meals. Provide pitchers and/or bottles of water. For dessert if serving one, provide fresh fruit, fruit crisps, small cookies, or small servings of sorbet.

Break Suggestions (am and pm):

- Bagels with low fat cream cheese or jams - cut bagels in halves or quarters
- Whole grain muffins (cut in half if not serving mini muffins) and whole grain breads instead of Danish, croissants or doughnuts
- Raw vegetables with low fat dip or fresh or dried fruit
- Low fat yogurt
- Low salt pretzels or lightly seasoned popcorn
- Low fat milk or evaporated skim milk for coffee

Lunch/Dinner Suggestions:

Appetizers/First Course

- Raw vegetables with low fat dip and fresh fruits
- Salads with low fat salad dressing on the side
- Soups that are vegetarian broth-based or creamed from pureed vegetables or evaporated skim milk

Entrees

- Sandwich platters - cut sandwiches in half so people can take smaller portions. Offer low fat mayonnaise as a condiment on the side. Use whole grain breads.
- Pasta dishes made with part skim mozzarella and part skim ricotta cheese (e.g. pizza, lasagna). Serve pasta with tomato or other vegetable based sauce rather than cream sauces.
- Meat servings limited to a 4 ounce portion (fresh seafood, skinless poultry, lean beef-eye of round, London broil).
- Baked potatoes with low fat or vegetable toppings on the side.
- Salads with dark green lettuces; spinach; beans and peas; grilled, lean meat and low fat cheeses.

Accompaniments:

- Use a combination of low fat mayonnaise and plain yogurt for potato salads, etc.
- Serve at least two vegetables with each meal, and avoid butter or cream sauces.
- Avoid fried foods.
- Provide raw vegetables or pretzels instead of potato chips or french fries.
- Include whole grain breads and rolls.