Healthy Eating Environment: A Call to Action

The Alberta Coalition for Prevention and Control of Vascular Disease (ACTION) Network

Adapted from Nutrition Services
*Health Eating Environment: Healthy Eating Starts Here Steps to a Healthier You 2014*
Objectives

By the end of this presentation, you will be able to:

1. List / identify how the environment impacts food choices

2. Identify strategies to improve eating environments to promote health

3. Describe the importance of advocating for healthy eating environments
Overview

• What is eating healthy?
• What prevents us from healthy eating?
• What is a healthy eating environment?
• How does the environment impact healthy eating?
• Challenges and solutions to healthy eating
• Will advocacy for healthy public policy have an impact?
What is Healthy Eating?

Healthy Eating:

A way of eating that emphasizes healthy food choices, variety and portion sizes consistent with Canada’s Food Guide.
What prevents us from healthy eating?
What Prevents Us From Healthy Eating?

- Many people think that individuals are solely responsible for their own eating behaviours.

- However, evidence shows that the environment plays a part in what, where, when and how we eat.

“We can only resist the food environment so long before giving into temptation.” (Curitti, 2011)
What Prevents Us From Healthy Eating?

Common reasons:

• Increasing variety of food choices
• Increasing portion sizes
• Subconscious / automatic eating
What Prevents Us From Healthy Eating?

Common reasons:

• Food prices

• Celebrations and holidays
What is a Healthy Eating Environment?

Healthy Eating Environment

- is a setting which makes choosing healthy eating easy for everyone. This includes:

  • Having leadership and organizational values that support healthy eating
  • Physical spaces that provide a place to eat, water fountains, food facilities, etc.
  • Having healthy food options available at all times
Types of Environments

- Macro-level environments (sectors)
- Physical environments (settings)
- Social environments (networks)
- Individual factors (personal)
Types of Environments

- Environment influences our choices
- We can have control over some factors in our environments
Types of Environments

- There are some factors in our environments that we have **less control** over.

- It is important to be aware of these factors so we can find ways to manage them.
Environments Affecting Food Choices

- Individual
  - Eating Away from Home
  - Recreation facilities
  - Home
  - Work
  - Retail Food Stores
  - Childcare
  - School
Healthy Eating at Recreation Facilities

- Recreation facilities are often the cornerstone of many communities.
  - Activities
  - Gatherings/ celebrations
- Food is offered in
  - Vending machine
  - Cafeterias
  - Activity programs
  - Catering/ special events
Challenges to Healthy Eating at Recreation Facilities

Eating choices are influenced by:

- Catering menus for meetings and parties
- Food available in vending machines, cafeteria and concession stands
- Foods offered for community or promotion events
- Food rewards
- Food offered for bagged day camp lunches or snacks
Solutions for Healthy Eating at Recreation Facilities

Recreation centres can offer healthy foods and beverages.

Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth: A childcare, school and recreation/community centre resource manual

Solutions for Healthy Eating at Recreation Facilities

- Ask vendors for healthy food and drink options in healthy portions (vending machines, cafeterias, concession)
- Offer non-food rewards or giveaways
- Promote healthy eating at programs or events
- Offer healthy food choices at community or promotional events
- Ask for healthy food and drinks options from caterers
- Ask for appliances (fridge, microwave) and an eating area (lunch room) to help support staff with healthy eating
- Advocate for a healthy food environment policy at your facility
Challenges to Healthy Eating at Work

Employed Canadians spend at least 60% of their waking hours at work

Eating choices are influenced by:

• Social norms and cues
• Food availability
• Shift work
Challenges to Healthy Eating at Work

Eating choices are influenced by:

- Food based celebrations/rewards
- Catered meetings and events
- Stressful work environment
- Vending machines, convenience stores, cafeterias
Solutions for Healthy Eating at Work

• Decide if food is needed at each meeting / gathering and if so choose healthy options

• Ask for healthy options in cafeterias / vending machines

• Start a worksite health promotion program
Solutions for Healthy Eating at Work

• Ask for appliances (fridge, microwave) and an eating area (lunch room) to help support healthy eating

• Ask for support from co-workers and management
Solutions for Healthy Eating at Work

- Bring your own meals
- Keep a supply of healthy foods at work
- Take meal and rest breaks
- Drink water or other healthy drinks
Challenges to Healthy Eating at School

- Amount of time to eat

- Available food choices
Challenges to Healthy Eating at School

• Vending machines

• Pricing

• Location of convenience stores, fast food restaurants, etc.

• Fundraisers / special events
Solutions for Healthy Eating at School

Students can bring healthy lunches and snacks from home
Solutions for Healthy Eating at School

Schools can decide to offer healthy food and beverages for special food days, sports days, tournaments and classroom celebrations.
Solutions for Healthy Eating at School

Resources to assist with changing the school environment are found at

www.healthyeatingstartshere.ca
Challenges to Healthy Eating at Child Care

- Menu variety
- Mealtime environment
- Role modeling
Challenges to Healthy Eating at Child Care

• Fundraisers/
  Special events

• Unsupportive posters,
  books, displays
Solutions for Healthy Eating at Child Care

• Develop or encourage a healthy eating policy
  - See Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth for directions on how to create a policy

• Supportive posters, books and visual displays
Solutions for Healthy Eating at Child Care

- Include healthy nutrition messages as part of program planning and activities

- Follow the division of responsibility (feeding relationship- you decide what and when, the child decides how much)
Advocate for Healthy Eating Environments

• Unhealthy eating is the leading cause for premature death and disability in Canada
  – Estimated 864,000 years of life lost in 2010
  – Inadequate vegetable & fruit in our diets is a significant contributor to risk of chronic disease

• Statistics Source: Global Burden of Disease Study 2010
  http://www.healthmetricsandevaluation.org/gbd/visualizations/gbd-arrow-diagram
## Advocate for Healthy Eating Environments

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<th>Years of Disability (Disability Adjusted Life Years)</th>
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Advocate for Healthy Eating Environments

- Policies in Alberta encouraging healthy work places and child/youth settings are voluntary
  - This has resulted in sporadic implementation in facilities such as daycares, schools, worksites and recreation facilities.

- If we advocate for these programs, policies may be more comprehensively implemented
Call to Action

• Ensure organizations you belong to have policies to promote healthy eating

• An organized strong advocacy approach could result in implementation of comprehensive policies supporting healthy eating environments
Summary

- The environment plays a part in what, where, when and how much we eat.

- Healthy eating environments make the **healthy choice, the easy choice** – for everyone.

- You can make a difference and impact healthy eating environments in organizations you belong to.
Resources

- Eat Smart Meet Smart- How to Plan and Host Healthy Meetings, Events and Conferences
- Eating Well with Canada’s Food Guide
- Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Adults
- Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth
- Healthy Eating Environment in AHS: http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/5234.asp
For More Information

Healthy Eating Starts Here

HealthyEatingStartsHere.ca
Questions?