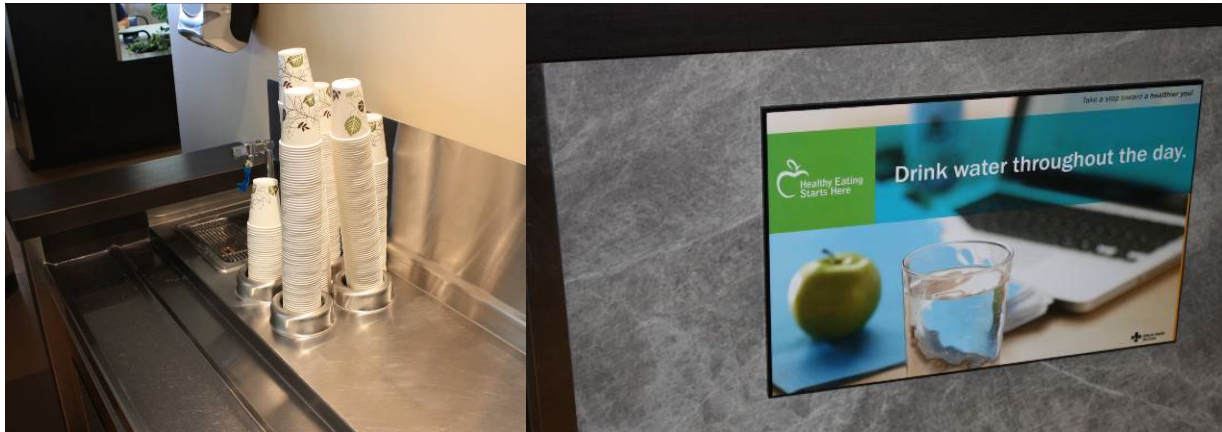


# Healthier Cafeteria and Catering: Red Deer Hospital and Centennial Centre Success Story



Nutrition and Food Services (NFS) staff have been working together to support healthier food environments in both cafeterias and catering at two Central Zone sites.

## Cafeterias

NFS staff at **Red Deer Hospital's Garden Court Café** started making healthy changes to their food offerings in 2012-13, including:

- Offering healthy options like whole grain breads, muffins, baguettes and cereals daily
- Providing fresh fruit cups and vegetable platters daily
- Removing the deep fat fryer
- Discontinuing sale of potato chips or chocolate bars
- Limiting portion sizes of sugar sweetened drinks to 355 mL

The **Centennial Centre** cafeteria in Ponoka also made similar changes to their offerings. The food service staff are always looking for ways to make food items healthier while keeping them tasty.

Public health nutrition dietitians became involved early in 2013 to help with further improving the food environment at both sites. Using provincial nutrition guidelines, they created an inventory and assessed current cafeteria menu items.

The public health dietitians created a cafeteria spreadsheet to track:

- The food rating and rationale for each entrée assessed (i.e. Choose Most, Choose Sometimes or Choose Least Often)
- How frequently the menu item is offered

## Catering

Their latest public health nutrition project is to create a similar spreadsheet for catering on both sites. “We have started to assess catering menu items and recommend ways to make them healthier,” says Jennifer Sundberg, a public health dietitian in Red Deer. “We are also updating the catering form, to highlight healthier menu items with a colour coding system.”

## Working Together

Having public health dietitians involved with cafeteria menu assessment was new for NFS. This partnership between Food Services and Nutrition Services has educated and enhanced knowledge of staff which will help them ensure healthier options are available in our cafeterias.

## Key Learnings

- Start with a small project with concrete tasks. “At times we felt we bit off more than we could chew,” notes Sundberg.
- Consult with food services staff and ask for their input from the start. This will help with buy-in of the project.
- Consider partnering with all food providers at your site to make consistent changes. A coordinated effort will help ensure an even playing field for sales at your site.
- Support from management is essential to the success of the project.
- Improving the food environment is a process – it takes time to make changes. Patience and perseverance are essential.
- Celebrate your successes! Any step made to improve the food environment is a step forward! Communicate to your staff about all the good the work they are doing.
- Even if you are unsure about what you can do, dive in and take a chance!

For more information, resources and tools about the Healthy Eating Environment in AHS initiative, visit the AHS website at: [www.albertahealthservices.ca/nutrition/Page5234.aspx](http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/nutrition/Page5234.aspx).



*Posters at the Garden Court Café encourage customers to make healthy choices.*