

Meet Smart, Eat Smart

How to Plan Healthy Meetings, Office Gatherings and Events

Most adults spend half their waking hours at work and often many of those hours are spent sitting in meetings. Meetings, events and conferences are a central part of the work world, and most often involve food and drinks. For many people, food choices at work are a significant portion of the total calories they consume in a day.

Improved eating habits at work can have a significant impact on your overall health and well-being. It makes good business sense to serve healthy food and drinks at meetings. Healthy eating habits contribute to:

- increased productivity
- more positive employee morale and daily well-being; and
- a decreased risk of chronic diseases including cancer, stroke, obesity, Type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis, and hypertension.

The *Meet Smart, Eat Smart* guide highlights healthy food and beverage options and provides tips on how to plan and host healthy meetings, events, office gatherings. The guide outlines ideas of healthy food and beverage options to serve and sample menus for meals and snacks. You will also find ideas for how you can build in opportunities for participants to be physically active during a meeting, event, or gathering.

Avoid Offering Food at Every Meeting

- Determine if food is necessary for the meeting (offering food does **not** have to be the norm)
- Avoid offering food between meal times
- Offer healthful beverages instead of food when possible
- Use incentives other than food to motivate attendance at meetings such as raffle prizes, product incentives, 50/50 raffle, etc.
- Involve others in decision-making regarding healthy food for events or meetings
- On meeting evaluations, include a question on food satisfaction

Tip: See [Meeting Movements](#) for ideas to get participants moving.

Offer Healthier Food Options

- Choose foods that are lower in fat and calories
- Offer fruits and vegetables (choosing seasonal and organic when possible)
- Present foods in smaller portion sizes
- Use smaller sized plates

Tip: See ideas below for beverages, snacks, breakfast items and lunch menus.

Beverages

If you feel that it is necessary to provide nourishment at your meeting, consider offering beverages instead of full meals or snacks:

- Water
 - Ice water
 - Bottled spring, sparkling, or flavored water (calorie-free)
- Juice - 100% fruit juice or 100% vegetable juice
- Milk - Skim, low fat milk, low-fat chocolate, or vanilla flavored soymilk
- Coffee - Flavored/unflavored, Regular and decaffeinated
 - Creamers – skim, low fat milk, or fat-free half & half
- Tea - Regular, herbal, and green (hot or cold), Regular or decaffeinated
 - Creamers – skim, low fat milk, or fat-free half & half
- Other
 - If you must provide soda, choose diet soda
 - Sugar free hot chocolate

Tip: Choose smaller cup sizes.

Snacks

If you are going to offer snacks, make them low in saturated fat, calories and sugar. Offer options that will sustain their energy level and provide nutrition.

- Fresh fruit – tray or cut up and offered with low-fat yogurt dip
- Raw vegetables – tray or cut up and offered with fat-free or low-fat dressing or salsa dip
- Wheat Pretzels – served with sweet mustard dip
- Nuts
- Tortilla chips – whole grain baked and offered with salsa dip
- Popcorn – lower fat (5 g fat or less/serving)
- Whole grain crackers – (5 g fat or less/serving)
- Angel food cake with fruit topping
- Trail mix - whole grain cereal (Chex, Cheerios), dried fruit, almonds, soy nuts, pretzels

Breakfast Meeting/Gathering

Early morning meetings often provide breakfast foods. Breakfast is an important meal, so make sure your early meetings start the day in a healthy way.

- **Fruit**
 - Fresh fruit trays
 - Fruit baskets
 - Dried or canned fruit
- **Breads**
 - Low fat whole grain muffins (mini or cut in half)
 - Low fat whole grain breads
 - Mini whole grain bagels

Serve with low-fat cream cheese, jelly/jam or peanut butter. (Avoid butter or margarine)

- **Cereal**
 - Serve cereal with at least 4 grams of fiber per serving, preferably whole grain cereal such as raisin bran, low-fat granola, Cheerios, Whole Wheat Total, or Shredded Wheat
 - Oatmeal
 - Low-fat granola bars
- **Protein Sources**
 - Scrambled or hard-boiled eggs
 - Peanut butter
 - Fat-free or low-fat yogurt

Lunch Meeting/Gathering

Keep your participants energized with healthy options at lunch meetings:

- **Sandwiches**
 - Whole grain bread/wraps or tortillas (request it from your caterer, or look for the words “whole grain” or “whole wheat” in the ingredients)
 - Veggies (lettuce, tomatoes, onions, pickles, cucumbers, peppers, sprouts, avocados, artichoke hearts - all veggies are great)
 - Lean meats (fish, turkey, roast beef, or chicken)
 - Low-fat cheese
 - Tuna and chicken salads made with light or fat free mayonnaise
 - Light mayonnaise, mustard, or low-fat dressing
- **Salads**
 - Use mixed greens, not just Iceberg lettuce, and add any other vegetables
 - Serve low-fat or fat-free salad dressings on the side
 - Pasta salad or coleslaw (made with light or low fat mayonnaise, or oil and vinegar)
 - Fruit salads (can be fresh, canned, or frozen)
 - Platters of fresh vegetables with low-fat dip
- **Pizza**
 - Choose vegetables, chicken, or fruit toppings (avoid meat toppings)
 - Request to go light on the cheese
- **Sides & snacks**
 - Fresh fruits or vegetables, hummus, popcorn, pretzels, baked or reduced fat potato chips, baked tortilla chips with salsa, rice cakes, granola bars, trail mix, dried fruit or low-fat yogurt

Healthy luncheon menu suggestions:

- Turkey wraps (with lettuce, tomato, and light mayo or mustard) served with sliced oranges, grapes, or apples.
- Veggie pizza, and go light on the cheese.
- Create a salad bar (A sign up list with suggested healthy items to bring is available through the [Wellness Program](#))
- Crock pot luncheon with several selections of a chicken/turkey broth base soups, chicken/turkey chili, and/or other healthy crock pot meals (recipes are available through the [Wellness Program](#))
- Build your own turkey taco bar

Catering

If you are planning to cater lunch or an event, discuss with the vendor what they are willing to do to assist in providing healthy food options. Suggestions include asking to use low-fat dairy products and condiments, smaller portion sized entrees, whole grain breads, and fruits and vegetables as side options.

Movement at your Meeting/Gathering

- Start your meeting with a stretch and/or movement ice breaker.
- Provide attendees a movement break during extended meetings.
- Before taking your break, conduct a group stretch.
- Offer suggestions of safe walking routes in and around the building.