

# Healthy Eating

## Background Information/Rationale for Focus

The workplace is a great setting to promote healthy eating and has the potential to enable employees to make healthy choices every day. Many Canadian adults spend over half of their waking hours at work and most employees eat at least one meal or snack at work each day.

Research shows many adults in Ontario have poor eating habits<sup>1</sup>.

- Almost half of Ontarians get more than 31 per cent of their total calories from fat<sup>1</sup> (the recommendation is 30 per cent)<sup>1</sup>.
- 75 per cent ate less than 5 servings of grain products daily<sup>1</sup>. (Canada's Food Guide recommends 6-8 servings daily)<sup>3</sup>.
- 53 per cent ate less than 5 servings of vegetables and fruit daily<sup>1</sup> (Canada's Food Guide recommends 7-10 servings)<sup>3</sup>.
- 56 per cent did not consume the recommended minimum servings of milk or milk products daily<sup>1</sup>. (Canada's Food Guide recommends 2-3 servings)<sup>3</sup>.
- 29 per cent of Ontario adults reported having something prepared in a fast-food outlet daily<sup>1</sup>.
- Foods in the "other foods" category made up 22 per cent of calories consumed by Canadians<sup>1</sup>.



According to the 2005 Canadian Community Healthy Survey (CCHS), almost half of Canadian adults are at an unhealthy weight, with 15.5 per cent considered obese and 33.4 per cent considered overweight.<sup>2</sup> Eating well and being active can help employees to maintain a healthy weight. For more information on healthy weights, see the "Healthy Weights" section of this handbook.

Eating well (choosing and preparing foods with little or no added fat, sugar and salt) reduces the risk of certain types of cancer, heart disease, stroke, obesity, diabetes and other diseases. Employees who eat well and are physically active are employees who feel better, have increased energy and are more productive. While most people want to eat better, they are bombarded with many messages about healthy eating and are left looking for practical tips on how to eat healthier.

Healthy eating programs in your workplace can support employees to make healthy eating changes. While it is important for your workplace to increase employee awareness and skills related to healthy eating, it is also important to create an environment that supports employees in choosing healthy foods while they are at work.

## Goals for the Workplace to Strive For

1. To increase awareness of the health risks associated with unhealthy eating, lack of physical activity and unhealthy weights.
2. To provide skill building opportunities enabling employees to make healthier food choices.
3. To provide a supportive environment for employees to consume a healthier diet, including at least seven servings of vegetables and fruits daily.
4. Develop a healthy eating policy that requires healthy foods to be in vending machines, cafeterias and during meetings and celebrations.

## Getting Started

### **Workplace Wellness Team, Environmental Scan and Needs Assessment**

- Create a workplace wellness team, which includes employees and management to gauge your workers needs and interests;
- Complete an environmental scan to determine how supportive the workplace is regarding healthy eating and physical activity;
- Conduct a needs assessment to determine what healthy living initiatives are important to employees; and,
- Based on the results of your environmental scan and needs assessment, consult with the workplace wellness team to decide which interventions fit with the requirements of your workplace.

### **Awareness Raising**

- Dedicate an accessible area for bulletin boards or displays featuring pamphlets and resources regarding healthy lifestyle issues, healthy eating and meal strategies; and,
- Include short articles in an internal newsletter, intranet or staff e-mails (check websites e.g. Public Health E-bulletin and local newspapers for relevant articles).

### **Skill Building**

- Offer presentations or workshops based on employee interest through lunch and learn sessions discussing pertinent issues such as healthy behaviours for busy lifestyles and understanding label reading information on food packages;
- Provide continuing education for management and employees to encourage healthy eating habits; and,
- Distribute self-screening tools (questionnaires, checklists) to employees to help assess their eating and physical activity habits and request feedback for interested topics/issues about making healthier choices.

### Creating a Supportive Environment

- Conduct an environmental scan to determine how supportive the workplace is regarding healthy eating and physical activity;
- Supply refrigerators and microwaves for staff to store lunches and snacks;
- Offer appropriate foods in workplace cafeterias, vending machines at workplace functions including pot-lucks and celebrations;
- Provide educational funding, reimbursement, paid time off and flexible work arrangements, to allow employees to attend workshops or courses healthy eating and active living; and
- Use non-food items for rewards and/or fundraising activities.
- Become an Eat Smart! work place.

### Workplace Example:

#### Host Meetings with Healthy Eating Choices

Develop guidelines to provide healthy food choices at all meetings and workshops. This will help employees be more productive, focused and energized. Some examples of healthy snacks include vegetables & dip, fruit trays, yogurt, cheese & whole-grain crackers, lower-fat muffins, or whole grain bagels served with beverages such as water, milk or 100 per cent fruit/vegetable juice.

### Healthy Workplace Policy Suggestions

- Develop healthy eating policies suited to your particular workplace environment based on your needs assessment (please contact Project Health staff for more information). Policies can address vending machines, fundraising and foods served in cafeterias, meetings and celebrations; and
- Establish work schedules that are compatible with healthy eating and wellness programming, and consider the demands and responsibilities of workers outside of the workplace.



Telephone consultation is available through **Project Health: 519-883-2287**

### Region of Waterloo Public Health Resources

#### *Public Health Resource Centre:*

To borrow teaching kits/books/video resources please call: 519-883-2256

To order pamphlets: e-mail [phrc@region.waterloo.on.ca](mailto:phrc@region.waterloo.on.ca) or call the automated order line: 519-883-2374 or order online at [www.region.waterloo.on.ca/ph](http://www.region.waterloo.on.ca/ph) -- Resources/Resource Centre/Pamphlets

#### Books and Publications

What to Eat. (Marion Nestle, 2006)

Posters:

Cook it up healthy!  
Food's got it all: the ABC's of healthy eating  
Fruits; Vegetables  
Go the healthy way: eat well, live well and feel great  
Healthy choices  
In your own style: make nutrition come alive: it's all about you.  
Sizing up servings

Teaching Kits: (kits include lesson plans, handouts, and resources, some with video/DVDs)

All About Calcium - (food model kit)  
Calorie Confidential (DVD only)  
The Dollars and Sense of Eating Right  
Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide (food model kit)  
Food Model Kit  
Healthy Eating for New Canadians (food model kit)  
Healthy Eating: What's Your Choice?  
Healthy Measures  
How to Make Healthy Fast Food Choices  
Presenting Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide (for Health Intermediaries)  
Reading Food Labels (for Health Intermediaries)

*Displays:*

Beverage Basics  
Eat healthy. Live active. (Generic)  
Eat healthy. Live active. (Workplace)  
Portion Distortion (with food models)

Pamphlets/Fact Sheets:

*For employers and wellness providers:*

Eating well with Canada's Food Guide: A Resource for Educators and Communicators  
Healthy Food Guidelines for Workplaces

Pamphlets/Fact Sheets continued:

*For workers:*

4 Steps to stronger bones (limit 10)  
A Guide to Eating Fish for Women, Children and Families  
Bone Health for Adults Over 50  
Calcium Calculator (limit 10)  
Cutting Back on Salt – What You Can Do  
Eating Well with Canada’s Food Guide  
Eat well. Live longer  
EatRight Ontario – Questions on Healthy Eating?  
Fantastic Fibre – Boost Your Intake!  
Freezing Fruit  
Freezing Vegetables  
Healthy Habits, Healthy Weight: A Practical Guide to Weight Management  
Heart-healthy Eating Guide for Your Family  
Nutrition Facts: Reading Food Labels  
Registered Dietitians in Private Practice – Waterloo Region  
Sources of Emergency and Low-cost Food in the Region of Waterloo  
Top 5 Things You Need to Know About Trans Fat  
Vitamin D: What You Need to Know

Order Eat**Right** Ontario promotional items from the resources section of <http://www.serviceontario.ca> by searching “**Eat Right Ontario**” under **Publications**, or call **1-877-510-510-2**

## Internet Resources

[www.projecthealth.ca](http://www.projecthealth.ca)

Canadian Cancer Society

<http://www.cancer.ca>

Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety

<http://www.ccohs.ca> – look for the section on healthy eating at work

Canadian Council of Food and Nutrition

<http://www.ccfm.ca/>

Canadian Diabetes Association

<http://www.diabetes.ca>

## Internet Resources continued

Centre for Disease Control LEANworks!

<http://www.cdc.gov/leanworks/> (Be aware that American resources may be used such as the Food Pyramid. Please use Canada's Food Guide in place of the Food Pyramid).

Dietitians of Canada

<http://www.dietitians.ca> - check out EATracker (<http://www.eatracker.ca>), a tool for tracking personal food intake and nutrition recommendations and <http://www.healthyeatingisinstore.ca> for nutrition labeling education resources.

EatRight Ontario (1-877-510-5102)

<http://www.eatrightontario.ca> check out the EatRight Ontario personal menu planner <http://www.eatrightontario.ca/en/MenuPlanner.aspx> and the section on workplace health <http://www.eatrightontario.ca/en/WorkPlacehealth.aspx>.

Ellyn Satter

<http://www.ellynsatter.com> - promoting healthy eating habits for families

Foodlink Waterloo Region

<http://www.foodlink-waterlooregion.ca>

Health Canada

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/index-eng.php> - Food and Nutrition section  
<http://www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide> Canada's Food Guide. (Available in ten languages).

Healthy Measures

<http://www.healthymeasures.ca>

Healthy Waterloo Region (Healthy Weights)

<http://www.healthywaterlooregion.ca>

Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada

<http://www.heartandstroke.ca>

Leslie Beck

<http://www.lesliebeck.com/page.php?id=1&type=sec>  
<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/opinions/columnists/leslie-beck/>

Nutrition Resource Centre

<http://www.nutritionrc.ca/> - Look for the Guide to Nutrition Promotion in the Workplace under the resources section.

## Internet Resources continued

Public Health Agency of Canada  
<http://www.publichealth.gc.ca>

Sodium 101  
<http://www.sodium101.ca>

Region of Waterloo Public Health Nutrition Resources  
<http://www.region.waterloo.on.ca/nutrition>

5 to 10 a Day  
<http://www.5to10aday.com>

## References

1. Garriguet, D. (2006). *Nutrition: Findings from the Canadian Community Health Survey 2004. Overview of Canadians' Eating Habits*. Statistics Canada. Catalogue No. 82-620-MIE2006002.
2. Statistics Canada, *Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS), 2005* (extracted July 22, 2008).
3. Health Canada. (2007). *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide*.  
<http://www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide>. Retrieved 23/07/2009



**Project Health**  
Supporting Healthy Workplaces