



# Guide for the Promotion of Healthy Eating in Workplaces

Strategies to support a healthy eating environment in the workplace



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## Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Purpose of the Guide for the Promotion of Healthy	Eating in Workplaces 5
Getting Started	8
How to Start a Healthy Eating Programme	9
Focus of a Healthy Eating Programme	14
Supporting the Workplace Environment	15
Lead by Example and Foster Support	16
Develop a Workplace Policy/Guide that Promotes H	Healthy Eating 16
Create Physical Spaces that Support Healthy Eating	16
Promote Access and Availability of Healthy Food ar	nd Drink Options 16
Breastfeeding Support	19
Supporting the Personal Health Practices of Employees	20
Educate and Increase Awareness of Healthy Eating	21
Celebrate, Recognize and Provide Employee Suppo	rt 22
Appendices	23
Appendix I: Assessing Healthy Eating in the Workpl	ace 24
Appendix II: Sample Employee Questionnaire	29
Appendix III: Action Plan Template	31
References	32

## Introduction



## Purpose of the Guide for the Promotion of Healthy Eating in Workplaces

The Ministry of Health and Wellness has developed the *Guide for the Promotion of Healthy Eating in Workplaces* in order to provide guidance and support to employers who seek to encourage employees to improve their health. You can use the *Guide for the Promotion of Healthy Eating in Workplaces* as a resource to enhance the Healthy Eating component of your workplace wellness programme. It highlights how to start a healthy eating programme, actions workplaces can take to support healthy eating and includes supporting tools and resource links to implement your programme. You may use all or some of the suggestions based on the size of your organization, the needs of your employees and what you can manage to implement.

## Why workplaces should be concerned about healthy eating

The working population represents the age group that is most affected by NCDs and as such, the workplace provides an ideal setting to support the promotion of health to a large audience. Workplaces are key spaces for improving wellbeing as working adults spend a third of their waking hours at work (2). The health of employees impacts their ability to perform and contribute to the workplace. Employees that are nourished and healthy have enhanced physical and mental well-being. Healthy eating combined with active living and a positive outlook can lead to (3):



These can help to reduce absenteeism and increase productivity in the workplace. In addition, health promotion in the workplace initiatives addressing healthy diet reported several benefits including (4):



"The concept of the health promoting workplace (HPW) is becoming increasingly relevant as more private and public organizations recognize that future success in a globalizing marketplace can only be achieved with a healthy, qualified and motivated workforce. For nations, the development of HPW will be a pre-requisite for sustainable social and economic development (WHO, 2018)".

### Díd you Know?

The World Health Organization (WHO) indicates that non-communicable diseases (NCDs), inclusive of heart disease, cancer, stroke and diabetes, together account for almost 70% of all deaths worldwide. The increase in the prevalence of NCDs is attributable to mainly four risk factors:



Jamaica is faced with a double burden of under and over-nutrition. This means that even though the population is becoming increasingly overweight/obese, there is also a deficiency in some vitamins and minerals. According to the Jamaica Health and Lifestyle survey III (1):





Approximately 1 in 3 Jamaicans had hypertension





Approximately 1 in 4 women were anaemic



Approximately 1 in 10 Jamaicans had Diabetes

The dietary practices of most Jamaicans are not in keeping with the National Food Based Dietary Guidelines. There is an overconsumption of foods high in salt and sugar and an under-consumption of fruits and vegetables. In fact, the survey indicates that:



Approximately 1 in 10 Jamaicans consumed excess salt/sodium

**† † †** 

Approximately 1 in 3 Jamaicans consumed fruits at least 2 times per day



Approximately 1 in 3 Jamaicans consumed a sugar sweetened beverage at least once per day

Approximately 1 in 4 Jamaicans consumed vegetables at least 2 times per day

#### How workplaces can promote healthy eating

Workplaces can help promote healthy eating by creating a healthy eating environment and supporting the personal health practices of employees. A healthy eating environment makes healthy eating choices the easy choice for all. It includes spaces to eat at, equipment to store prepare or serve food, and support for a healthy eating culture. A supportive work environment together with awareness, skills and knowledge in nutrition can help employees put healthy eating into practice.

## Getting Started

## How to Start a Healthy Eating Programme

It is important for employers to encourage healthy lifestyles among employees while providing a safe and healthy workplace. A healthy eating program can be an important step. Everyone plays a role in creating and promoting a work environment that supports healthy eating. You can get started with making changes in the workplace with the following steps (3,5):



### 1. Assess your workplace's eating environment

In order for your healthy eating programme to be successful, it should take into consideration the type and structure of the worksite, employee needs and personal and organizational health goals. Conducting an assessment of your workplace will assist you in getting this information. The assessment should capture the factors that influence employee health including:

- individual level factors such as lifestyle choices
- the work environment such as physical working conditions and social support
- the organizational level such as culture, policies, and practices.

Consider what your current eating environment is like and what changes can be made to support healthy eating in the workplace. Look at the types of foods and drinks available and how they are offered in canteens, vending machines, meetings and workplace celebrations. Explore how healthy eating information is provided to employees, if at all. An assessment of your workplace can help to decide what your priorities are.

You may use a number of methods to get the information needed. These include:

- conversations
- a call for input/opinions such as a bulletin board, opinion box, email requesting ideas
- instruments such as an employee surveys or environmental audit.



It is important that you involve employees from the beginning as this will reinforce the shared responsibility and commitment the employee and the organization have to employee health, and the overall success of the workplace health program. The Ministry of Health and Wellness' *Healthy Eating Assessment Tool* is developed to help you assess the extent of implementation of strategies in your workplace to promote healthy eating and help to prevent heart diseases, stroke and related conditions such as hypertension, diabetes and obesity. The tool may be found in **Appendix I** and may be downloaded from the Ministry of Health and Wellness' website. An example of an employee questionnaire may be seen in **Appendix II**.

#### 2. Develop an Action Plan

In order for your healthy eating programme to be successful, you need to put in place a basic governance structure or infrastructure to administer and manage nutrition promotion activities. There needs to be buy in from leadership and employees. Your governance structure should provide the strategic direction, leadership, and organization necessary to operationalize the program elements. This will help to ensure program objectives are achieved, employee health risks are appropriately managed, and the company's resources are used responsibly. Strategies to ensure appropriate governance include:

Dedicating senior leadership support to serve as a role model and champion Identifying a workplace health eating coordinator, council or committee to oversee the program Developing a workplace healthy eating improvement plan with sufficient resources to articulate and execute goals and strategies

Communicating clearly and consistently with all employees Establishing workplace health informatics to collect and use data for planning and evaluation

Take into consideration the interests of your audience. In this case:

- Ask employees, managers and any other key individuals for their feedback and suggestions on priority areas for change.
- Find out why people are interested in a healthy eating program. Are participants looking for general nutrition information, or more specific programs such as heart health?
- Be sure to consider what types of programs have been offered in the past. Which programs worked? Which did not?
- Know exactly who your target audience is.
- Plan when the program will be offered (seasonal, or all year).
- Identify who people can go to if they have individual questions or want more help.



In developing your workplace healthy eating improvement plan, consider that the size and scope of each step may be influenced by factors such as your company's size, sector, or geographic location. It is important to remember that a successful program does not necessarily incorporate all potential strategies. A successful program is one whose components are carefully selected, implemented efficiently, and is suited to the employee population. It may be more effective to focus on one or two policies/programs at first and build on early successes rather than poorly implement several interventions at the beginning. Workplace health eating programs also do not have to cost significant amounts of money. Many effective interventions such as health eating related policy changes exist that are low-cost which is especially important for small and medium sized employers who may not have lots of resources to dedicate to employee health.

Determine and prioritize which strategy your workplace will implement. Both current health issues as well as employee interests should be considered when prioritizing program and policy interventions as well as evaluating and making improvements to the workplace health program on an ongoing basis.

a. Identify the highest impact strategies not currently in place at your workplace

b. Use this information and your scores to prioritize future strategies that are relevant, feasible and consistent with your organization and employee needs, health issues and health promotion budget

c. Identify which of your priority strategies are feasible short or long term accomplishment

d. Use the information to develop an Annual Workplace Health Improvement Plan and Budget.

e. Decide on how to monitor and track change

### 3. Put Your Plans into Action

You have many opportunities to influence the work environment in order to promote healthy eating and prevent disease. Changing the environment will have a great impact as it affects large groups of workers simultaneously and makes adopting healthy behaviors much easier if there are supportive workplace norms and policies. The overall workplace health program should contain a combination of individual and organizational level strategies and interventions to influence health.

Remember that no matter how much you plan or make people aware, healthy eating programs are voluntary - not everyone will join or be interested.

### 4. Monítor your Progress

Plan to evaluate the programs, policies, benefits, or environmental supports implemented. It is important to assess how well the workplace healthy eating program can be sustained over time, how it is received by employees and management, and its return on investment. The evaluation should identify potential gaps in current offerings; and describe the efficiency and effectiveness of the resources invested.

#### 5. Celebrate success

Take time to celebrate your successes, both big and small. Recognition of positive changes can build momentum for more changes. Your team may wish to think about ways to share successes, such as hosting a celebration event or posting a success story on the organisation's internal website.



## Focus of a Healthy Eating Programme

The National Food Based Dietary Guidelines (2015) contains eight (8) guidelines aimed at promoting healthy behaviours and practices that will help the population aged 2 years and older to make healthy food choices. Workplaces that are going to start a healthy eating program should focus on the main messages from the National Food Based Dietary Guidelines. You should also ensure that wherever your employees get their food, whether canteens or tuck shops, should offer some healthier food choices.



The	Eat a variety of foods from all the food groups daily;
National Food Based	Eat a variety of fruits daily;
Dietary	Eat a variety of vegetables daily;
Guidelines - suggest	Include peas, beans and nuts in daily meals;
that the	Reduce intake of salty and processed foods;
population: -	Reduce intake of fats and oils;
	Reduce intake of sugary foods and drinks; and
-	Make physical activity a part of your daily routine.

# Supporting the Workplace Environment

### Lead by example and foster support

- Lead by Example. Choose healthy foods and drinks for yourself and take meal breaks.
- Encourage employees to be champions and involve them in making changes.
- Support employees with work time to help lead or participate in activities and making changes.

# Develop a workplace policy/guide that promotes healthy eating

Put in place policies and/or guidelines that encourage or require healthy food and drink options to be available. A policy is different from a guideline in that a policy has consequences for non-compliance whereas guidelines are not a formal process. Even though a policy is not essential, it can help create sustainability by ensuring that practice becomes embedded within the culture of the workplace.

## Create physical spaces that support healthy eating

- Ensure eating areas are available that include seating, a refrigerator, microwave, sink etc.
- Ensure there are bins for garbage and recycling near eating areas and that they are cleaned daily

# Promote access and availability of healthy food and drink options

Provide employees with access to healthy meal and snack options. This applies to food and drinks offered in canteens, vending machines or external vendors operating in your workplace. It also applies to catering, celebrations, and fundraising activities.

## Food service outlets, for example canteens and vending machines

#### **Availability:**

Increase the availability and variety of healthy meal and snack options in easy to access locations.

Provide healthier snacks and drinks that are lower in salt (sodium), sugar and fat.

Make a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables available in the cafeteria.

Make existing recipes healthier by using:

- Ingredients that are lower in fat, trans fat, saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars.
- Whole grain products such as whole grain bread, brown rice and whole wheat pasta.
- More vegetables and fruits.
- Vegetables should be cooked just adequately or served raw (adequately washed)
- Low fat milk such as skin, 1% or 2% milk or yogurts
- Less processed foods
- Healthier cooking methods such as roasting, grilling, steaming or baking
- Less sauces and condiments

Offer food and drinks in smaller portion sizes, such as small muffins or half sandwich options.

Provide less healthy food and drinks (such as chips, deep fried food, candy, high fat baked goods) in small portions and a limited variety

Ensure water fountains, tap water or water coolers are available and easy to access.

#### Access:

Price healthy food options competitively.

Ensure healthy food and drink options are visible and in easy to access locations. Consider stocking healthy foods at eye level and putting less healthy options in less visible places.

Identify healthier food choices on the menu or label accordingly.

#### Meetings and functions

Schedule meetings outside of meal times to allow employees time for meals. Provide food and drinks at meetings only when necessary, such as meal times. Arrange or request healthy catering at meetings, events and conferences.

Provide plain water at meetings throughout the day.

Discourage sugar sweetened beverages.

#### Around the worksite

- Consider using the facility's outdoor space for edible gardens
- Encourage employees to bring healthy food and drinks instead of less healthy options

## **Breastfeeding Support**

There are a number of benefits for employers when breastfeeding mothers are supported in the workplace. These include significant:



You may support breastfeeding in your workplace through a number of strategies including (6):

Policy or guide to support breastfeeding women
Teaching employees about breastfeeding
Providing designated private space for breastfeeding or expressing breastmilk
Allowing flexible scheduling to support expression of breastmilk during work. This includes at least two 20-30 minutes breaks per 8 hrs shift.
Giving mothers options for returning to work such as teleworking, part time work and extended maternity leave
Providing on site or near site child care
Providing refrigerated storage for breastmilk
Offering or referring professional breastfeeding management services and support

# Supporting the Personal Health Practices of Employees

This section provides an overview of actions workplaces can adopt to support the personal health practices of their employees. Use the ideas listed below to support best practices such as: educating and increasing awareness of healthy eating, celebrating and recognizing success, and encouraging participation.

# Educate and increase awareness of healthy eating

Start by gathering some information about employees' current eating behaviours and knowledge of healthy eating. Find out what healthy eating topics or activities they would be interested in. Use the results to identify actions that support healthy eating.

Provide nutrition information to employees through printed materials, internal email, websites, newsletters and/or group sessions Schedule education opportunities for employees to learn about healthy eating, such as choosing and preparing healthy foods, healthy portion sizes or snack choices Direct employees to healthy recipes from sources that have been assessed by registered Dietitians or registered Nutritionists Highlight healthy choices at catered events using table signage Host Healthy Eating Competitions Commemorate National Days such as Caribbean Nutrition Day and Caribbean Wellness Day

### Examples of topics for educational sessions

- ✓ Understanding the Basics
- ✓ Weight Management and Body Image
- ✓ Fad Diets
- ✓ Eating Healthy on a Budget
- ✓ Eating Healthy While Eating Out
- ✓ Healthy Eating on the Run
- ✓ Reading Food Labels and Making Smart Choices While Grocery Shopping
- ✓ Reducing Salt Intake
- ✓ Planning Balanced Meal for the Family
- ✓ Vegetarian Eating
- ✓ Aging Well

# Celebrate, recognize and provide employee support

- Celebrate successes towards healthy eating in the workplace
- Share success stories and ideas with each other and between workplaces
- Use non-food rewards and recognitions, such as e-cards, bulletin boards with photos, flowers, gift cards, fitness and movie passes.
- Encourage participation by providing recognition to each employee who participates in the program and/or achieves a goal.
- Weight loss challenges are discouraged as some changes to achieve weight loss may not be healthy or sustainable. Weight gain after weight loss is common; this can contribute to feelings of failure, shame or guilt, which is not the intention of a workplace challenge.
- Organize employee appreciation events with healthy catering or potluck with healthy foods and drinks
- Include healthy foods at celebrations, such as birthday and retirement events. For example, if cake is served, offer smaller portions and include fruits on the side.
- Offer incentives and/or support for employees who are working to improve their personal eating habits and nutrition behaviours, including a session with a Registered Dietitian/Registered Nutritionist or scheduled work time to attend healthy eating programs and groups





## Appendix I Assessing Healthy Eating in the Workplace

This sample assessment form can be used or adapted to assess your workplace's eating environment and the support available to help employees with healthy eating.

Name of Institution:	Assessme	ent Date:	
Institution Address:			
Parish: Number of St	taff:		
Assessor: Title:			
Interviewee: Title:			
Title:			
AREA	Yes	No	Score
Workplace Environment			
Policy/Guide to Promote Healthy Eating			
Policy/guide that supports healthy food and drink options at meetings is in place (policy/guide exists, is written and posted/visible) Answer "yes" if policy/guide makes vegetables, fruits, 100% fruit juices, trans-fat free/low salt/low sugar snacks or meals available during meetings.	2 points	0 points	points
Policy/guide that supports healthy food and drink options in workplace food service outlets such as canteens, vending machines and tuck shops is in place (policy/guide exists, is written and posted/visible)	2 points	0 points	points

AREA	Yes	Νο	Score			
Answer "yes" if policy/guide makes vegetables, fruits, 100% fruit juices, trans-fat free/low salt/low sugar snacks or meals available at canteens, tuck shops and vending machines.						
Your workplaces' score on Policy/Guide to Promote Healt	thy Eating s	ection	points			
Maximum score on Policy/Guide to promote Healthy Eat	ing section		4 points			
Physical Spaces that Support Healthy Eating	g					
Eating area is provided away from work distractions and includes seating and tables						
	2 point	0 points	points			
Hand washing sinks are available						
	2 point	0 points	points			
Refrigerators are available						
	2 point	0 points	points			
Microwaves and/or toaster ovens are available						
	2 points	0 points	points			
Your workplace's score on Physical Spaces that Support He	althy Eating	g Section:	points			
Maximum score for Physical Spaces that Support Healthy	Maximum score for Physical Spaces that Support Healthy Eating section 8 points					
Provision of Access to Healthy Food and Dr	ink Choi	ces				
At food service outlets						
Healthy food and drink options are in easy to access locations						
	1 point	0 points	points			
Canteens, vending machines and tuck shops provide a variety of healthy food and drink choices						
	1 point	0 points	points			
Recipes use healthy ingredients; recipe ingredients are lower in fat, trans fat, saturated fat, sodium and added						
sugars. Whole grains, vegetables and fruits are used where possible	2 points	0 points	points			
Smaller portion sizes are available eg. Small muffins or half sandwich and entrée options						
	1 point	0 points	points			
Most (more than 50%) of the food and beverage choices						
available in canteens, tuck shops and vending machines are healthier food items.	2 points	0 points	points			
Answer "yes" if the healthy foods are items such as skim milk, 1% milk, water, unsweetened flavoured water,						

AREA	Yes	Νο	Score
100% fruit juice, low salt, low fat and/or low sugar snacks and meals.			
Less healthy food and drink options (eg chips, candy, deep fried foods and high fat / sugar baked goods) are			
available in small portions and a limited variety.	1 point	0 points	points
Water fountains, tap water or water coolers are available and in easy to access locations.			
	2 points	0 points	points
Healthy food and drink options are priced competitively.			
	1 point	0 points	points
Healthy food and drink options are placed at eye level with less healthy choices in less visible places			
	1 point	0 points	points
Nutrition information is provided on the menu or label to help employees with making healthy food choices.			
Examples include labelling healthy food choices with a symbol and/or providing calories, sodium and fat content on the menu	2 point	0 points	points
At meetings or events	<b>.</b>	1	1
Healthy food and drink options are available at meetings			
and functions	2 points	0 points	points
Meetings are scheduled outside of meal times to allow for meal breaks			
	2 points	0 points	points
Food and drinks are offered at meetings and or functions only when necessary, such as meal times			
	2 points	0 points	points
Plain water is offered at meetings			
	2 points	0 points	points
Around the worksite			
Employees are encouraged to bring healthy food and			
drink instead of less healthy options	2 point	0 points	points
Outside spaces are used for edible gardens			
	2 point	0 points	points
Your Workplace's score for the Provision of Access to Hea Choices section			

AREA	Yes	No	Score
Maximum score for the Provision of Access to Healthy Food and Drink Choices section			26 points
Breastfeeding Support			
Policy/guide that supports breastfeeding for employees is in place (policy/guide exists, is written and posted/visible)	2 points	0 points	points
Answer "yes" if the policy/guide is included as a component of other employee policies/guides or is a separate policy/guide related to breastfeeding.			
Private area that is furnished is provided (other than restroom) that may be used for employees to express			
breastmilk	2 points	0 points	points
Flexible paid or unpaid break times that allow mothers to express breastmilk are provided			
	2 points	0 points	points
Free or subsidized breastfeeding support groups or educational sessions are provided.			
Answer "yes" if these sessions address breastfeeding as a single health topic or if breastfeeding is included with other health topics. These sessions can be provided in person or online; onsite or off site; in group or individual setting; through onsite staff, community groups or health care practitioners.	2 points	0 points	points
Paid maternity leave is offered which is separate from any accrued sick leave, annual leave or vacation leave			
	2 points	0 points	points
Your workplace's Breastfeeding St			points
Maximum Breastfeeding St	upport sect	ion score:	10 points
Personal Health practices			
Educate and Increase Awareness of Healthy	Eating	T	F
Brochures, videos, posters, pamphlets, newsletters, or other written or online information that address the			
benefits of healthy eating are provided. Answer "yes" if these health promotion materials address the	2 point	0 points	points
benefits of healthy eating as a single health topic or if the benefits of healthy eating are included with other health topics			
Educational seminars, workshops, or classes on healthy eating are provided.			
Answer "yes" if these sessions address healthy eating as a single health topic or if healthy eating is included with other health topics. These sessions can be provided in person or online; onsite or off site; in group or individual setting; through onsite staff, community groups or health care practitioners.	2 points	0 points	points

AREA	Yes	No	Score
Images and messages in common areas, food service			
outlets and vending Machines support Healthy Eating	2 point	0 points	points
Your workplace's score on Educate and Increase awarene	1 •	· ·	points
Section	ss of nearti	iy Lating	
Maximum score for Educate and Increase Awareness of H	ealthy Eati	ng	6 Points
Celebrate, Recognize and Provide Employed	e Suppoi	rt	
Successes towards healthy eating are celebrated in the workplace			
	1 point	0 points	points
Employees are encouraged to share success stories and ideas for healthy eating.			
	1 point	0 points	points
Non-food rewards and recognitions are used such as e- cards, bulletin boards with photos, fitness passes			
	2 point	0 points	points
Recognition is given to employees who achieve a healthy eating goal or participate in a healthy eating activity			
	2 point	0 points	points
Your workplace's score for the Celebrate, Recognize and R	Points		
Support section			
Maximum score for the Celebrate, Recognize and Provide section	6 Points		

## Summary Score

Section	Maximum Score	Your Workplace Score		
Workplace Environn	nent			
Policy/guide to promote healthy eating	4			
Physical spaces that support healthy eating	8			
Provision of access to healthy food and drink choices	26			
Breastfeeding Support	10			
Total Score for Workplace Environment	48			
Personal Health Practices				
Educate and increase awareness of healthy eating	6			
Celebrate, Recognize and Provide Employee Support	6			
Total Score for Personal Health Practices	12			
Total Assessment Score	60			

### Appendix II

### Sample Employee Questionnaire

These are examples of questions you could ask employees to gather information about their eating behaviours and their knowledge of and interest in healthy eating. Adapt these questions to meet your workplace's needs. Consider your capacity to address results before you ask a question. Use results to identify actions that support healthy eating. Repeat the assessment at a later time to see how employees' eating behaviours and knowledge of and interest in healthy eating have changed.

#### 1. How healthy is your eating at work?

- □ Very healthy
- Healthy
- Unhealthy
- □ Very unhealthy
- Not sure

#### 2. Are you interested in improving your eating habits at work?

- □ Not interested, I am already eating healthy at work
- □ Not interested, I am not interested in eating healthier at work
- □ Interested, I am considering improving my eating habits at work
- □ Interested, I am planning to make changes soon
- □ Interested, I have already made changes

#### 3. My knowledge of healthy eating is:

- Very low
- Low
- 🗆 High
- □ Very high
- Unsure

#### 4. What are your barriers for healthy eating at work?

- □ Not having a place to eat
- □ Not having a place to store food
- □ Not many healthy eating options at the food service outlets
- □ Influenced by co-workers eating habits
- □ Many unhealthy foods available in the foodservice outlets,
- Others: \_\_\_\_\_

5. What do you think would help support you with eating healthier at work?

#### Additional comments:

### Appendix III

### Action Plan Template

Date	Organisation:			Plan created by: (include key contributors)		
<b>Goal</b> : Over the course of the coming year what are the changes that we are aiming to achieve?						
Objectives	-	Strategies	When and where will the strategy take place? Who is responsible for the strategy? What resources do new need?	Expected Results		Actual Results and
What are the measurable changes we will make to achieve the bigger goal?		Which strategies will we use to help us reach our goal? These may be existing or new		Outcomes Why are we doing this? What changes do we want to see?	Indicators How will we measure these changes?	Actual Results andreflectionsRecord the actualchanges thathappened.What did weaccomplish?What worked well?What can beimproved?

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