

Getting ready for healthier choices

Fact Sheet 1

We now know there's an undeniable link between unhealthy eating, becoming overweight and chronic disease. That's why South Australian health facilities will be providing healthier food and drink choices in the future and promoting healthy eating to staff, visitors and the general public.

The *Healthy Food and Drink Choices for Staff and Visitors in SA Health Facilities* policy has been developed to ensure more healthy food and drink choices and less unhealthy choices are provided in public health facilities, including hospitals, GP Plus centres and office buildings.

From 1 April 2009 SA Health is asking all public health facilities to start putting measures in place to comply with the policy, which becomes mandatory on 1 October 2010.

This document will help you to get started by outlining some easy ways to improve the healthy food and drink options in your organisation.

STEP 1. Getting started

Providing healthier food and drink choices in South Australian health facilities will require making a number of changes.

It is important to know what changes you will need to make, and to communicate the changes to staff and visitors. To get started, form a committee to advise and assist with identifying the changes required and developing an action plan specific to your organisation to implement these changes.

The committee should include representatives from a number of different areas including:

- > food outlet convenors or managers
- > chef or key food preparation personnel
- > supervisor or shift co-ordinator
- > dietitian or nutritionist
- > other SA Health staff representatives e.g. nurses, medical officers, other allied health professionals or administration staff
- > communications officer.

The committee can provide an important forum for members to share their ideas and experiences as the policy is implemented. It can also suggest ways to inform the broader community and gain feedback.



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STEP 2. Assess your current situation

Assess the scope of food and drink provision in your organisation, for example are there:

- > cafeterias, cafes, kiosks, canteens, shops or mobile trolleys
- > vending machines
- > shops and retail outlets on hospital grounds
- > catering at functions, meetings and events
- > fundraising
- > catering for patient or client education programs?

Then for each situation review the foods and drinks you currently have available by gathering information on ingredients and cooking methods, approaching suppliers for nutrition information on pre-packaged items, and assessing how foods and drinks are displayed. Fact sheet 2 summarises the nutrition standards that apply in each situation.

In steps 3, 4 and 5 below, we have used the example of making changes to pre-packaged snacks displayed in a snack stand in a shop, kiosk or other food outlet. A similar process would be used to assess food and drinks provided in other situations such as a cafeteria, catering for meetings or fundraising (referring to the relevant nutrition standards).

STEP 3. Classify menu items

Using the 'Food and Drinks Guide' along with the nutrient criteria (fact sheet 3), determine which category your products fall into - **GREEN**, **AMBER** or **RED**. It may be useful to assess each group of products as they are displayed, instead of trying to cover the entire menu at once. For example snack foods and confectionery might be displayed together in the one set of shelves.

STEP 4. Determining proportion displayed

The new policy will require limits on the amount of display space containing food or drinks from the **RED** category. To assess the overall proportion of products displayed from each category, start by counting the amount of display shelves or spaces that contain **GREEN**, **AMBER** or **RED** options.

In the snack stand depicted below there are 5 shelves. There are no **GREEN** category items displayed (0 **GREEN**), one shelf contains **AMBER** category items (1 **AMBER**) and four shelves display **RED** category items (4 **RED**).

Snack Stand	
Potato Crisps	
Chocolate Bars	
Lollies	
Muesli Bars	Cereal Bars
Block Chocolate	

Calculate the proportion of snacks from each category that make up the five shelves. One shelf contains snacks from the **AMBER** category. Of the five shelves, this represents 20 per cent of the snacks displayed.

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All the remaining shelves contain items from the **RED** category only, hence this represents 80 per cent of snacks displayed.

To calculate percentages, divide the number of shelves of each food type by the total number of shelves and multiply by 100. This is shown in the table below.

FOOD CATEGORY	Number of shelves of food type	Total number of shelves in unit	How to calculate total percentage	Total Percentage
RED	4	5	$\frac{4}{5} \times 100$	80%
AMBER	1	5	$\frac{1}{5} \times 100$	20%
GREEN	0	5	–	0%

STEP 5. Develop alternatives

Under the policy's nutrition standards, **RED** category options are limited to 20 per cent of items displayed – in the example below, a maximum of one full shelf may contain **RED** category items. **RED** options should also be placed on lower shelves to allow the promotion of healthier choices.

Increase **GREEN** and **AMBER** choices to represent 80 per cent of snacks displayed, that is, a total of four shelves in this example. It is recommended that **GREEN** items are placed at a prominent level i.e. eye-level shelves where possible. Refer to the snack stand depicted below.

Consider a few alternatives and trial these with customers to gain input on which options are preferred. For example, food outlets could offer taste tests or host cooking demonstrations.

Snack Stand		
Air Popped Popcorn	Tuna & Crackers	
Plain Pikelets	Diced Fruit Cups	
Rice Crackers	Salted Roasted Nuts	
Muesli Bars	Cereal Bars	
Potato Crisps	Chocolate Bars	Lollies

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STEP 6. Develop an action plan

Undertake steps 3, 4 and 5 for each situation where food is provided in your organisation.

Following this process, put together an action plan that identifies the best way to introduce and promote the required changes. The action plan helps you by identifying who is responsible for what tasks and when these must occur. This type of plan may be useful to help determine timeframes as well as monitor progress.

Remember, facilities will have until 1 October 2010 to implement the policy but the sooner you start the process, the easier it will be.

Visit www.health.sa.gov.au/pehs/health-promotion.htm for further information and resources to help put this policy into practice in your food service.

Adapted from Queensland Health's *A Better Choice – Healthy Food and Drink Supply Strategy* (2007)
- 'Getting Ready' Fact sheet

For more information

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www.health.sa.gov.au/pehs/health-promotion.htm

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