

Hosting Healthy Meetings, Events and Celebrations

Employees spend more than half of their waking hours at work. That means they most likely eat at least one meal at work and probably most snacks. The availability of healthy food choices at meetings and events can give employees the energy they need to stay alert and productive. Follow these tips to plan healthy workplace meetings, events or celebrations.

General Recommendations

- Consider offering food and beverages only during meetings and events that occur during traditional meal times such as breakfast, lunch and dinner.
- If food and beverages are served in between meals, limit the number of items to one or two healthy choices.
- When creating a menu for your event, consult [Canada's Food Guide](#) for ideas on foods and beverages to serve, as well as serving sizes.
- Consider limiting celebration events where less healthy food is served to no more than once per month.

Breakfast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer higher fibre, whole grain breads, bagels, muffins or cereals. • Provide portion size options such as slicing bagels in half or serving mini-sized muffins. • Include fresh fruit and yogurt. • Offer protein options such as poached or hard-boiled eggs, nuts or seeds as toppings for yogurts or cereals.
Lunch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salads: Add plenty of vegetables. Consider adding protein choices like beans, lentils, hard boiled eggs, nuts, seeds or cheese. Serve salad dressing on the side. • Soup: Choose broth-based soups or soups made with milk instead of cream, or try a bean/lentil-based soup. • Sandwiches: Ask for sandwiches to be made on whole grain breads/wraps and with vegetable fillings like lettuce, tomato, cucumber, pepper or grated carrots. Ask for mayonnaise, butter or margarine to be served on the side. • Entrees: Choose leaner meats, fish and poultry that have been grilled, broiled or roasted, instead of fried; offer vegetarian options, serve pasta with a tomato-based sauce instead of cream sauce, top pizza with vegetables and request whole grain crust. • Dessert: Offer local and seasonal fruit. For desserts such as squares of cookies, request small portions or cut in half.
Snacks	<p>Offer healthy options such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh fruit or vegetable kabobs with cheese. • Veggies with hummus or black bean dip. • Whole grain crackers and cheese. • Plain or vanilla Greek-style yogurt with berries.
Beverages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit sugary drinks. Have a pitcher of tap water available. Offer fresh lemon, lime or orange slices for extra flavour. • Offer plain low fat milk. • Offer decaffeinated coffee and herbal tea. Offer milk not just cream for coffee and tea.

Food Safety

- Check that the restaurant or takeout site is a licensed and inspected food premise. To view food safety reports, visit Halton's [dinewise program](#).
- Food should be delivered just prior to serving time. Food should be steaming hot (over 60°C) or cold (4°C or less) at the time of delivery and served within 30 minutes.
- Always [wash hands](#) prior to handling any food.
- Food left out at room temperature for more than two hours should be discarded.
- Clean all surfaces before and after food service.

Special Dietary Needs

Whenever possible, ask participants if they have special dietary needs due to food allergies or intolerances or dietary restrictions.

Physical Activity

Build in opportunities for [physical activity](#) to help keep participants alert.

- Choose activities that are appropriate for all abilities.
- Include stretch breaks or light physical activity breaks in the agenda.
- Replace a coffee break with a walking break.
- Announce to attendees that it is fine to move within the meeting space throughout the event (standing, stretching).
- Provide places for guest to stand up if they would like a break from sitting (for example, high top tables).

Environmentally Friendly

- Serve [locally-sourced](#) and sustainably-produced food whenever possible.
- Use regular dishes and utensils instead of disposable.
- Serve beverages in pitchers rather than individual plastic bottles or cartons.
- Use name tags that can be returned and reused.
- Provide [blue boxes and green carts](#) for recycling.
- Promote handouts on a flash drive or make them available online to reduce paper.

For more information on ways to create a healthier workplace nutrition environment, visit the Ontario Dietitians in Public Health [website](#), call 311 or 905-825-6000 (Toll free: 1-866-442-5866) or email accesshalton@halton.ca.

