

Be Well Recommendation for a Healthy Food Environment

The University of Tennessee Knoxville (UTK)'s mission is to enhance frontiers of human knowledge and elevate citizens of our region, country, and world.¹ To assist UTK employees achieve this mission, The University's Be Well initiative, seeks to improve the ability of UTK employees to make positive lifestyle choices to enhance their physical wellness.²⁻³ Everyone has a role in developing and maintaining a healthy food environment; especially at work.⁴ Healthy food guidelines for the UTK campus are paramount to cultivate a healthy food environment for employees and visitors.

Problem: UTK does not have guidelines available to employees about how to establish a healthy food environment for employees and visitors on campus.

Recommendation: For meetings or other university-funded gatherings that offer food, the Be Well initiative recommends that menus follow the *2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.⁴ Thus, menus should include the following options: low-fat dairy products, lean proteins, healthy fats, whole grains, vegetables, and/or fruits. Water should be provided along with other beverages. Sugar-sweetened beverages should be limited or not included as an offering. Food vendors are encouraged to follow the same recommendations.

Healthy Meeting Ideas

Suggestions for Beverages Offered at Meetings

- Offer fat-free or low-fat milk/creamer for coffee and tea⁵
- Rather than offer sugar-sweetened beverages, offer unsweetened beverages, fruit-infused water, fat-free or low-fat milk, or fortified soy beverages⁵
- Provide water as a complementary beverage at each meeting⁵

Suggestions for Foods Offered at Meetings

- Offer fruit or vegetable sides or entrees⁵
- Offer whole-grains breads or pastas⁵
- When offering a salad, consider using reduced-fat salad dressings or offer healthy oils and balsamic vinaigrettes⁵
- Try to serve food options that are lower in sodium⁵
- Strive to serve lean sources of protein like poultry, fish, or shellfish⁵
- Whenever possible, offer foods that are prepared in healthier ways (e.g., poaching, roasting, braising, broiling, grilling, or baking)⁵
- If desserts are offered, be sure that they are an appropriate portion size; if not, try cutting them in half to reduce the portion size. Consider offering fresh fruit for desserts in place of baked goods/other desserts⁵



Definitions:

- a) **Low-fat dairy products** - foods that are made from skim, 1%, or 2% milk and retain their calcium content⁵
- b) **Lean proteins** - foods that include (or are made from) eggs, lean meat, boneless skinless poultry, seafood, beans and peas, processed soy products, nuts, and seeds.⁶
- c) **Healthy fats** – dietary fats can be found in plant and animal foods, in liquid and solid form.⁷ Oils are fats that are liquids at room temperature and are considered healthier than solid fats.⁷
- d) **Whole grains** – foods made from whole oats, wheat, rice, barley, cornmeal, or other grains.⁸
- e) **Vegetables** – include fresh, frozen, raw, cooked, canned, dried/dehydrated, whole, or mashed vegetables.⁹
- f) **Fruits** - include fresh, frozen, raw, canned, dried, pureed, or whole fruit.¹⁰

Examples:

- I. **Low-fat dairy products** (containing lactose or lactose-free) include 1% milk, cheese, yogurt, or fortified soy beverages⁵
- II. **Lean sources of protein** include nuts, seeds, soy products, seafood, poultry, eggs, beans, and peas⁶
- III. **Healthy fats** include mixed nuts, avocados; olives; canola, corn, soybean, olive, peanut, and sunflower oil⁷
- IV. **Whole grains** include wheat bread or tortillas, whole grain pasta, brown rice, quinoa, oats, popcorn, and whole grain cereals⁸
- V. **Vegetables** include beans or peas, starchy vegetables like white or yellow corn and potatoes; dark green, orange and red vegetables⁹
- VI. **Fruits** include whole fruit, such as apples, bananas, grapes, oranges, peaches, pears, strawberries, watermelon, cantaloupe, or 100% fruit juice¹⁰

Resources:

- 1. *2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. Chapter 1: Key Recommendations: Components of Healthy Eating Patterns. Available at:
<http://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/guidelines/>
- 2. National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity Healthy Meeting Toolkit:
<http://cspinet.org/nutritionpolicy/Healthy-Meeting-Toolkit.pdf>