

**A Step-by-Step
Guide to
Incorporating
Healthy Foods into
Your New or
Existing Worksite
Vending Machine**

Introduction

This guide is designed to help you incorporate healthy food choices into your worksite via the incorporation of a new “healthy” vending machine, or the incorporation of healthy snacks into existing vending machines. If a break room “store” is present, healthy choices can be added to it as well. If you want to work with existing vending machines, you may be limited to unrefrigerated snacks. Examples of both refrigerated and non-refrigerated snacks will be listed. Foods that were determined to be the most popular in a recent study will be discussed. Nutrient density criteria will be given in order for you to have an easy method for determining healthy choices.

Nutrient Dense Criteria

Below is an easy guide to follow in order to help ensure the foods you buy are healthy. These guidelines are based on Dairy Council Standards. If a food has points, it is considered healthy; if a food has zero or negative points, it is not considered healthy.

1. Add one point to the food for each of the following:

- Has 10% or more Daily Value for vitamin A
- Has 10% or more Daily Value for vitamin C
- Has 10% or more Daily Value for calcium
- Has 10% or more Daily Value for iron
- Has 10% (5g) or more Daily Value for protein
- Has 10% or more Daily Value for fiber

2. Subtract one point from the food for each of the following

- Has 10% or more Daily Value for total fat (based on a 30% fat diet)
- Has 250 or greater kilocalories

3. If the food still has any points left, then the food is considered healthy. Foods with zero or negative points are not considered to be healthy.

4. Also, any fruit or vegetable, regardless of whether or not it fits the criteria, is suitable for the vending machine. In addition, fruit juice should be 100% juice or at least 75% juice.

Examples of Foods that are Healthy Choices

Foods that would meet the above criteria that need refrigeration are:

- milk
- V8 vegetable juice
- 100% fruit juices
- yogurt
- bagels with cream cheese
- string cheese
- pudding
- soymilk

Foods that meet the criteria that would not need refrigeration would be:

- water
- peanuts
- sunflower seeds
- baked chips
- granola bars
- tuna with crackers
- dried fruit
- breakfast bars
- pretzels
- cereal
- Welch's fruit snacks
- trail mix

- low fat beef jerky
- applesauce Fruit Rockets

Candy bars, candy, fried chips (i.e. regular Doritos, Lays, etc.), and most cookies would NOT meet the criteria.

Most Popular Snacks as Determined by a Recent Pilot Project

A study was recently done that incorporated healthy foods into vending machines to see if a profit could be made (J.Church, K.Paras, R.Johnson, J.Carlson). In addition to the main study objective, the most popular foods were determined. This will most likely vary with each worksite but here are some initial ideas that include brand names (this is important!):

- Chug's 1% chocolate milk
- Dole 100% fruit juices
- Seneca 100% apple juice cans (small)
- Dasani water
- V-8 vegetable juice
- String Cheese (any brand)
- Planter's peanuts
- Planter's sunflower seeds
- Low-fat beef jerky (any brand)
- Pudding (any brand)
- Lays and Doritos Baked Chips
- Nature Valley Oats & Honey granola bar
- Sunkist tuna with crackers
- Dried fruit (any brand)

Food Vendors

Most state agencies have contracted vendors. Communicate and work with them on your desires to include healthier options in machines. Vendors need to make a profit, but most are willing to try new items for the people they serve.

Expected Profits

Based on a recent pilot project done in schools, an average of \$1007 was made over a three month period. The lowest profits made were \$591 and the highest was \$1281 for three months. This may pale in comparison to soda sales but actually surpasses the profits made by non-healthy vending machine snacks, which during the same period made an average of \$702 over the three months. The three schools had very different socioeconomic status's to increase the ability to generalize for schools wishing to incorporate healthier snacks. Therefore, minimum profits that can be expected to be made for one machine, for most schools, are about \$600 for one semester (about three months).

Creativity

Probably the most important part of making a shift to offering healthier choices to employees is creativity. Creativity is essential to making your project the most successful that it can be. This means trying new snacks, having a large variety of snacks, and being willing to rotate out foods, even if it's your favorite snack! People's preferences change with the season and with the newest commercials. For example, Propel water may be very popular in the hot summer but not at all in the winter. Therefore, foreseeing these kinds of changes is important when selling healthier foods to help ensure continuously level sales. Also, choosing snacks with attractive packaging may make all of the difference. Before giving up on a particular snack, see if there isn't different packaging options.

Why Make the Shift?

Snacks sold in vending machines are often highly available to employees and typically contain unhealthy food. With the growing obesity epidemic in America, most

Americans are bombarded with unhealthy vending machine snacks, and are not even offered the choice of healthier snacks, such as those listed above. This makes it almost impossible to make healthier choices. Offering healthy snack alternatives will promote health among employees, while still giving them the freedom to purchase what they want.

Happy Trailmix!

Good luck on this noble adventure! It will be well worth the time and research needed to get it started. Once it's going, it doesn't require too much more time over the unhealthy snacks, especially if you're doing only non-refrigerated snacks. Your employees will thank you for the new choices. Remember to get feedback from them too, in the form of a survey or verbally, to maybe discover new products. Otherwise, sales of individual snacks will help you to know whether a food is popular or not.