

Guidelines for Healthy Meetings



Introduction

The connection between food, physical activity and health are well documented. Offering healthy choices at meetings and other events can make it easier for people to eat healthy foods and be physically active. Making simple changes to foods, drinks and breaks offered at group and community events gives New Yorkers disease-fighting foods and an energy boost without worries about too many calories, too much unhealthy fat, or too much sedentary time. There are three parts to these guidelines – general guidelines, suggestions for menus and physical activities, and a sheet to provide to the vendor.

General Guidelines

Healthy food certainly can taste good. Most food service professionals now have some familiarity with healthier food preparation options and are willing to accommodate requests for changes to their usual fare. You might want to ask for a sample ahead of time. Registration forms should provide space to indicate food allergies or dietary restrictions.

- ✓ Serve low-calorie and low-fat foods.
- ✓ Serve fruits and vegetables whenever possible.
- ✓ Serve small portions (e.g., cut bagels in halves or quarters, etc.).
- ✓ Serve milk (fat-free or 1%), 100% fruit or vegetable juice, water or iced tea (unsweetened) instead of soft drinks.
- ✓ Lunch and dinner don't have to include a heavy dessert – fresh fruit, a fruit crisp or cobbler, small cookies, etc. are fine options.
- ✓ Include a vegetarian option at all meals.
- ✓ Provide reduced-fat or low-fat milk for coffee rather than cream or half and half (evaporated skim milk also works well for coffee - make sure it's not sweetened condensed milk).
- ✓ Provide pitchers of water.

Providing participants with physical activity breaks at meetings and events will help them stay alert and focused. In addition to including physical activity breaks in the agenda, it's important to consider hotel location, facilities and accommodating people of all abilities in any activities planned.

- ✓ Choose a location where participants can easily and safely take a walk or roll. For overnight meetings, choose a place where participants can walk to dinner or evening entertainment. Provide participants with maps of the area showing good walking routes.
- ✓ Choose a hotel that has good, accessible fitness facilities, e.g., a fitness room and pool. Include information about these facilities in materials you send to participants.
- ✓ Consider a casual dress code for the meeting - this allows people to participate in physical activities more easily.
- ✓ Organize physical activity breaks that can be modified or adapted for people of all abilities, such as stretching exercises that can be performed in a seated position.

Guidelines for Healthy Meetings

Menu Suggestions

Breakfast

- Fresh fruit (cut up and offered with low-fat yogurt dip)
- High-fiber cereals such as bran flakes, low-fat granola or oatmeal
- Fruit toppings (raisins, dried fruit mix, fresh strawberries, bananas, blueberries, peaches) for hot and cold cereals
- Hard cooked eggs
- Vegetable omelets
- Low-fat yogurt
- Eggs made with egg substitute or without yolks
- Thinly sliced ham
- Bagels (cut in half) served with fruit spreads, jams, hummus, or low-fat cream cheese

Light Refreshments

- Consider whether it is necessary to offer a morning and afternoon food break
- Fresh sliced fruit and vegetable tray – offered with low-fat dips
- Whole grain crackers or granola bars (5g fat or less per serving)
- An assortment of low-fat cheeses and whole grain crackers
- Baked Pita chips served with hummus
- Whole grain muffins (cut in half if not serving mini muffins) and whole grain breads
- Low-fat yogurt
- Pretzels, popcorn, baked chips, or trail mixes

Lunch and Dinner

- Salad that includes a variety of mixed salad greens and served with low-fat dressing
- Whole grain breads and rolls
- Mustard and low-fat mayonnaise as condiments for sandwiches, or cranberry sauce if you're offering turkey
- Sandwiches presented in halves, so people can take a smaller portion
- Broth-based soups (using a vegetarian broth), or soups using evaporated skim milk instead of cream
- Pasta dishes (lasagna, pizza) with low-fat cheeses (part skim mozzarella, part skim ricotta) and extra vegetables or pasta with tomato or other vegetable-based sauces
- 4-ounce maximum portions of meat and plenty of low-fat, low-calorie side dishes
- Raw vegetables or pretzels instead of potato chips or French fries.
- Vegetables – steamed, fresh or cooked without butter or cream sauces.

Physical Activity Suggestions

- Organize an early morning physical activity opportunity, e.g., a morning walk.
- If you are planning a walking activity, look for safe walkways with ample width and curb cuts so people who use mobility devices can participate.
- Encourage participants to take the stairs. Place signs near the elevators telling people where the stairs are located.
- Encourage networking by suggesting people take a walk together and talk about their common interests.
- Schedule brief activity breaks in the morning and afternoon, e.g., walking in place, stretching, or resistance band use.

Guidelines for Healthy Meetings

The following are general guidelines to use when planning meals for meetings and other events. It is important to provide delicious, healthy food choices to help people eat well. We hope that this information will help you work with us to provide healthy meals to our participants.

General Guidelines

- ✓ Offer low-calorie and low fat foods and/or small portions (e.g. bagels cut in halves or quarters).
- ✓ Always offer vegetables, fruit and low-fat milk.
- ✓ Include a vegetarian option at all meals.
- ✓ Provide no more than a 4-ounce serving of meat.
- ✓ Provide pitchers of water.
- ✓ Provide at least some whole grain breads and cereals.
- ✓ If serving a dessert, provide fresh fruit, fruit crisps, small cookies, or small servings of sorbet.

Menu Suggestions

Breakfast

- Fresh fruit.
- Yogurt.
- High-fiber cereals such as bran flakes, low-fat granola and oatmeal.
- Fruit toppings (raisins, dried fruit mix, fresh strawberries, bananas, blueberries, peaches) for hot and cold cereals.
- Hard cooked eggs.
- Vegetable omelets and eggs made with egg substitute or without yolks.
- Thinly sliced ham or Canadian bacon.
- Whole grain or part whole grain bagels (cut in half) served with fruit spreads, jams, or low-fat cream cheese.

Light Refreshments

- Fresh sliced fruit and vegetable tray – offered with low-fat dips.
- Whole grain crackers or granola bars (5g fat or less per serving).
- An assortment of low-fat cheeses and whole grain crackers.
- Pita chips served with hummus.
- Whole grain muffins (cut in half if not serving mini muffins) and whole grain breads.
- Low-fat yogurt.
- Pretzels, popcorn, baked chips, and trail mixes.
- Bagels with low-fat cream cheese or jams - cut bagels in halves or quarters.
- Low-fat yogurt.

Lunch and Dinner

- Raw vegetables with low-fat dip and fresh fruits.
- Salads with low-fat salad dressing on the side.
- Broth-based soups (using a vegetarian broth), or soups using evaporated skim milk instead of cream.
- Raw vegetable salads marinated in fat-free or low-fat Italian dressing.
- Sandwich platters - cut sandwiches in half so people can take smaller portions. Offer mustard and low-fat mayonnaise as condiments on the side. Use whole grain breads.
- Pasta dishes made with part skim mozzarella and part skim ricotta cheese (e.g. pizza, lasagna). Serve pasta with tomato or other vegetable-based sauces.
- Meat servings limited to a 4 ounce portion (fresh seafood, skinless poultry, lean beef – eye of round, London broil).
- Whole grain breads or rolls.
- Baked potatoes with low-fat or vegetable toppings on the side.
- Salads with dark green lettuces; spinach; beans and peas; grilled, lean meat and low-fat cheeses.
- Pasta, tofu and vegetable salads with fat-free or low-fat dressing.
- Desserts: frozen yogurt or sorbet, small cookies, small individually wrapped chocolates, fruit crisp.