

SUPPORTIVE NUTRITION ENVIRONMENTS IN THE WORKPLACE



While personal factors can influence eating habits, environmental factors play a significant role in one's food choices. Eating habits that nourish the body are more likely to be facilitated and sustained if the environment supports those behaviours.

Foods and beverages made available during meetings and events are important to consider. A healthy workplace nutrition environment exists when a workplace goes beyond educating employees and uses a comprehensive approach to create a truly supportive food environment.

Consider the following to help foster a supportive nutrition environment:



Meeting and Event Duration

- Most meetings and events do not need to have food and/or beverages provided.
- For meetings and events that are two hours or less in duration, offer beverages (e.g., pitchers of cold water, coffee, and tea) unless the event is taking place over a regular mealtime. For meetings and events of longer duration, offer food and beverage options that consider the guidance below.
- When hosting community events where attendees may experience food insecurity, consider providing food and/or beverages regardless of event duration.



Nutritional Balance

- Foods are not inherently good or bad, but they do have nutritional differences and benefits. Provide meal options that consider variety and balance.
- For recommended ideas, see the resource "[Food Ideas to Serve in Your Workplace](#)".





Cultural Diversity and Food Allergies/Intolerances

- All efforts should be made to select food and beverage options that are culturally acceptable and accommodate food allergies/intolerances of those that are being served. This demonstrates respect for and valuing of differences within our community.
- Inquiries about special dietary requirements or restrictions should be made in advance to ensure appropriate arrangements can be made for participants.



Sustainable Diets and Planetary Health

- Minimize waste from food, food packaging, and disposable dishes and cutlery. Where feasible, choose food and beverages packaged in recyclable containers and use recyclable dishes. Consider reusable dishes if feasible. Attendees are encouraged to bring their own refillable water bottle or reusable mug. Municipal water is the water option of choice, with bottled water provided only if the situation or environment deems it necessary.
- Leftover food can be offered or donated to charitable food programs. This should be done with recognition that food charity is not a solution to food insecurity.* See [Reference Document for Safe Food Donation](#) for more information. If donating wild game, consult with a Public Health Inspector.
- Consider providing a vegetarian meal for all participants, instead of just as an option. Plant-based foods tend to contribute significantly less to carbon emissions.
- Local foods can be considered to support our regional communities, economy and environment.

*Effectively reducing food insecurity requires addressing the root cause of poverty, and requires income-based solutions.

Diet Talk

- Recognize the negative impact of **diet talk** on workplace nutrition environments.
- Avoid using language that labels food as good/bad, healthy/unhealthy, should eat/shouldn't eat, which conflates eating with morality. For example, when describing food at an event, describe the foods without using labels (e.g. "sandwiches and salad" instead of "healthy lunch").



Food Safety

- When providing food, ensure food safety measures are respected, which includes purchasing food and beverages from inspected food premises in good standing. Use the "[Operating Guidelines for Special Events](#)" to ensure that all food preparation and service requirements are met.

 For additional information and ideas, visit:

- » [Food Ideas to Serve in Your Workplace](#)
- » [UnlockFood.ca](#)
- » [Canada's Food Guide](#)
- » [Safe Food Handling Tips](#)
- » [Understanding Food Labels](#)
- » [The EAT-Lancet Commission on Food, Planet, Health](#)