

Providing
healthier
beverage options

in your workplace

What is this about?

These guidelines explain how to improve the choice of beverages available to staff in your workplace. They are designed to help you gain the support of management and staff to improve the quality of available beverages as part of workplace health, safety and wellness responsibilities.

Why should I care?

A workplace that supports wellbeing has staff who are more productive, happier and healthier. Employees spend 60% of their waking hours at work and this usually includes at least one meal time. Most people consume more energy than they use or 'burn off', resulting in weight gain and other related health problems. Sugar-sweetened beverages can contain large amounts of sugar (and, therefore, energy) but few other nutrients. Swapping sugar-sweetened beverages for low or no-sugar options is an easy way for employees to improve their health.

Who is this for?

These guidelines are for workplaces looking to take steps to improve the health and wellbeing of employees. The guidelines can be used to improve the quality of beverages supplied in vending machines, cafeterias and at staff functions.

What are low-sugar beverage options?

Water should be promoted as the best drink choice.

Other low or no-sugar options include:

-  unflavoured milk
-  tea
-  coffee
-  artificially sweetened, diet or zero drinks.



Healthy beverage guidelines

for workplaces

Background

These healthy beverage guidelines are intended to assist workplaces to support the health of their staff by improving the quality of beverages available in the workplace. They will assist workplaces in creating an environment that supports healthy choices and reduces the risk of obesity and related health problems by reducing the consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages. Sugar-sweetened beverages include carbonated soft drinks, juice, sports drinks, energy drinks, flavoured milks, cordials or any drinks that contain sugar. Examples of sugar-sweetened beverages and low-sugar options are given in Appendices 1 and 2.

Offering healthier beverage choices should be considered as part of a wider workplace wellness programme that encourages staff to improve their overall health. The benefits of a well-designed workplace wellness programme include improved

productivity, performance, efficiency and staff morale.

Obesity has serious health, social and economic consequences. Poor diet and physical inactivity, along with the health consequences of overweight and obesity, heart disease, cancer and diabetes, are the leading causes of death in New Zealand.¹ Obesity places additional burdens on workplaces, such as increased costs associated with absenteeism and poor productivity.

Changes in society over the last three decades have made it harder for individuals to maintain a healthy weight. Among these changes are increased availability and consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages. For many people, consumption of these beverages makes a significant contribution to their daily energy intake.

Most employees spend at least eight hours each day in the workplace. The work environment can influence beverage choices, especially if employees have limited access to purchasing beverages outside the workplace. Increasing the availability of low-sugar beverage options can reduce consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages.

Steps for introducing a healthy beverage programme in your workplace

1

Identify key personnel

Identify personnel in the workplace who can advocate for change and support the introduction of healthier choices. Include staff from different departments throughout the workplace, as well as management, to increase buy-in and acceptance of the programme. Select staff who can be champions that inspire their colleagues to swap sugar-sweetened beverages for low-sugar options.

2

Do a stock-take

The first step in creating a healthier beverage environment is to assess current beverage availability. Identify:

- the types of beverages currently available
- prices and placement of beverages in the workplace
- how beverages are promoted, including meal combo deals, 2 for 1 specials, and advertising at point of sale
- any contracts or agreements with vending suppliers or caterers.

3

Formulate a healthy beverage policy

Identify the changes your organisation would like to make. Decide which beverages to reduce or eliminate and which to promote through a new policy. It may be easier to make changes slowly, gradually phasing out sugar-sweetened beverage options and replacing these with low-sugar options rather than suddenly changing all beverage choices. Involve senior management in developing the policy. Their support at an early stage is critical to success.

A policy template or wording to include in a workplace wellness policy is attached in Appendix 3.

4

Educate staff and other stakeholders

With the support of senior managers, inform staff about the negative health impacts of sugar-sweetened beverages and benefits of low-sugar alternatives. Inform staff early in the process about proposed changes so that they can share their concerns and strategies can be created to address them. Make the process transparent and straightforward. Focus on creating a healthier work environment by promoting healthier options rather than restricting selections. Highlight that the changes are for the benefit and wellbeing of staff, and that your organisation wants to support employees to have good health.



Implement the programme and policy

Staff cafeterias

The approach for transitioning to healthier beverages in staff cafeterias will depend on existing catering contracts and support from catering staff. Involve catering staff early in the process and seek their support. Cafeterias and kitchens are excellent sites for displaying signage that educates staff on the health benefits of choosing low-sugar beverage alternatives. Strategies could include the following:

- Changing the relative price of sugar-sweetened beverages to make low-sugar choices more desirable. Use revenue from price increases on sugar-sweetened beverages to off-set lower prices for healthier options like bottled water.
- Reducing access to sugar-sweetened beverage choices by limiting the number and portion sizes offered. Guidelines recommend reducing the serving size of flavoured milk and fruit juice to 250ml or less, and artificially sweetened drinks to 355ml or less.
- Offering discounted food and drink deals that include a bottle of water with purchase.
- Actively promoting water as the best choice through signage in the cafeteria, kitchen or on vending machines.
- Providing a water cooler – this could be promoted as a free, refreshing drink for staff.
- Removing advertising for sugar-sweetened beverages in cafeterias, kitchens and on vending machines.

Vending machines

Vending machines often include sugar-sweetened beverages in large portion sizes. Aim to increase the low-sugar options available in vending machines and use pricing strategies to make these options more appealing.

Catering for staff functions and meetings

Create a catering menu that makes healthy beverages the standard option. This includes water, tea and coffee.

Promote low-sugar beverages

Promote water and low-sugar choices through cafeteria signage and a workplace education campaign. This may include staff newsletters or email alerts.

Walk the talk

Encourage senior management to model healthy beverage choices. When visitors attend the workplace for meetings, ensure they are offered healthy beverage choices.



Celebrate success

Once your healthier beverage programme is part of your workplace, celebrate success with staff and stakeholders. Use staff newsletters to highlight positive changes about the benefits of choosing healthy beverages.

Flavoured milks and breakfast

drinks provide calcium and protein but are high in sugar, making them a less healthy choice than unflavoured milk.

Carbonated ('fizzy') soft

drinks are high in sugar and provide no other nutrients. They are not recommended as part of a healthy diet.

Fruit juices

are high in sugar. One hundred percent fruit juice provides some nutrients including vitamin C. The New Zealand Food and Nutrition Guidelines recommend limiting consumption of fruit juice because of its high sugar content.²

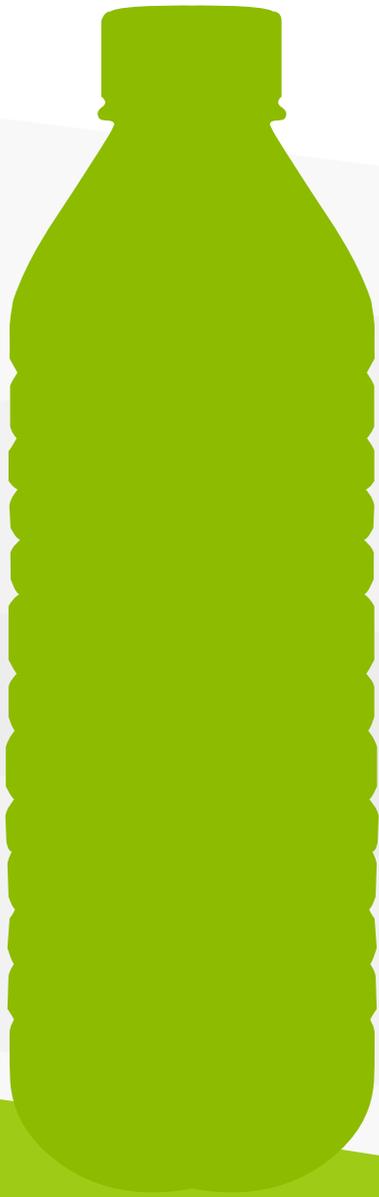
Energy drinks are high in caffeine and contain similar amounts of sugar to sports and soft/fizzy drinks. They are not recommended for children, pregnant and lactating women, and individuals sensitive to caffeine.

What are sugar-sweetened beverages?

Flavoured waters contain less sugar than other sugar-sweetened beverages, but are often sold in large serving sizes and, therefore, can contain large amounts of sugar. For example, a 700ml bottle contains around 5 teaspoons of sugar.

Fruit drinks and cordials contain few nutrients, are often artificially flavoured and coloured, and are high in sugar.

Sports drinks are designed for sportspeople needing fluid and carbohydrate replacement during endurance sport activities, ie, activities over 90 minutes. Sports drinks are generally available in large serving sizes and therefore contain large amounts of sugar. For example, a 750ml bottle of sports drink contains around 15 teaspoons of sugar.



Examples of low and no-sugar beverage options

Water is the best choice and should be promoted in all settings where beverages are offered. Water provides a healthy, low-cost, beverage option and contains no energy. Ideas for promoting consumption of water in the workplace include:

- ensuring all staff have access to clean, fresh, cold water via water coolers, water filters or water fountains
- providing staff with reusable water bottles
- always having jugs of water available at meetings
- providing lemons or other fruit in kitchens so staff can flavour their water.

Milk provides an important source of key nutrients including calcium, vitamin D and protein. The New Zealand Food and Nutrition Guidelines recommend New Zealanders consume at least two servings of milk and milk products each day.² Ensure your workplace provides low-fat milk options for staff.

Coffee and tea are among the most popular beverages consumed. Both contain caffeine, although coffee contains more caffeine than tea. The Heart Foundation suggests limiting coffee to no more than five cups each day.³ The addition of sugar to tea and coffee does contribute to energy intake.

Diet (artificially sweetened or zero sugar) soft drinks provide a useful alternative to sugar-sweetened carbonated soft drinks by providing the flavour without the added sugar. Evidence suggests that diet or zero soft drinks can help reduce sugar intake and, as a result, reduce energy intake. However, diet/zero drinks tend to be acidic and can contribute to tooth erosion. Therefore, it is recommended that diet/zero drinks should only be consumed occasionally in small quantities and with food, rather than between meals.

Appendix 3

Sample Policy

for Healthy Beverages in Workplaces

This wording could be added to your existing workplace wellness policy

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance for the sale, availability and promotion of beverages in (workplace name).

Scope of Policy:

This policy applies to any and all beverages offered or sold in (workplace name).

Policy:

1. (Workplace name) will promote water as the preferred beverage.
2. Clear signage will promote water as the healthy option.
3. The availability of sugar-sweetened beverages will be reduced in the staff cafeteria and vending machines and replaced with low or no-sugar options.

Signed by: _____ Date: _____

Need more support?

If you would like to develop a workplace healthy eating programme or policy to complement your healthy beverage programme, the following toolkits may be useful:

- WorkWell for Healthy Eating Toolkit
www.workwell.health.nz/vdb/document/182
- Auckland Regional Public Health Service Heartbeat Challenge
www.workplacehealth.co.nz/index.cfm?PageID=76
- The Heart Foundation
www.heartfoundation.org.nz/programmes-resources/food-industry-and-hospitality/Hospitality-Hub/specific-food-service-sectors/workplace-cafeteria/workplace-food-and-nutrition-policy

References

1. Ministry of Health (2012). Mortality and Demographic Data 2009. Wellington, Ministry of Health.
www.health.govt.nz/publication/mortality-and-demographic-data-2009
2. Ministry of Health (2003). Food and Nutrition Guidelines for Healthy Adults: A background paper. Wellington, Ministry of Health.
www.health.govt.nz/publication/food-and-nutrition-guidelines-healthy-adults-background-paper
3. Roberts D (1999). Coffee and caffeine: An evidence-based nutrition statement from the National Heart Foundation of New Zealand's Nutrition Advisory Committee.
www.heartfoundation.org.nz/our-work/positions-submissions-and-policy/healthy-eating-position-statements

These guidelines are produced by the Health Promotion Agency, Wellington and are available from
www.hpa.org.nz/what-we-do/workplace-wellness

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