

# Healthy Meeting & Event Guidelines

MARYLAND STATE EMPLOYEE WELLNESS  
INITIATIVE

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL  
HYGIENE

The Maryland State Employee Wellness Initiative aims to promote healthy eating and active living at state agencies and facilities. A key part of this goal is ensuring that employees have access to healthy food and beverage choices and to physical activity in workplace meetings when possible. The State Employee Wellness Initiative has developed healthy meeting guidelines that can be used when planning and purchasing food for any work related meeting, conference, or celebration. These guidelines apply the ideas recommended by the 2010 Dietary and 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans.

The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans help individuals make smart choices about food, beverages and physical activity. The Dietary Guidelines emphasize two main goals: 1) balance caloric intake with physical activity to achieve and sustain a healthy weight and; 2) consume more nutritious foods and beverages, such as—fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean meats, low-fat dairy—while consuming less unhealthy fats (e.g. saturated, trans fat), sugar and sodium. The Dietary Guidelines are updated every five years to include the most current scientific and medical knowledge regarding healthy lifestyle.

The 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines are designed to provide information and guidance on the types and amounts of physical activity that provide substantial benefit for Americans. These guidelines offer information on the amount and type of exercise that has been shown by scientific literature to improve health, based on an individual's age and special conditions (e.g. pregnancy, postpartum period, disabilities, and chronic health conditions).

This guide offers ideas and examples on how to make meetings healthier. It includes suggested foods and beverages to consider when discussing refreshment options with caterers, choosing restaurants or conference sites to hold events, or asking colleagues to prepare or purchase food and beverages for meetings. It also includes suggestions and tips on how to incorporate physical activity into workplace meetings.

*Meetings and events offer excellent opportunities to provide healthy foods and beverages and options for physical activities to participants.*



## Ideas for Healthy Foods and Beverages at Workplace Meetings

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*Healthy eating and active living help to reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, some cancers and obesity. Incorporating healthier food choices at workplace meetings is a simple way to help keep attendees healthy. Please reference the Appendix for other menu considerations.*

### A Healthy Meeting Meal IS:

- Well balanced—it includes fruits, vegetables, protein and whole grains. Visit [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov) for more information on creating a balanced plate.
- Limited in foods high in solid fats, added sugars and salt.
- Delicious!

### A Healthy Meeting Meal does NOT need to:

- Be restricting in any way.
- Leave individuals feeling hungry afterwards.
- Be boring or bland.



The following pages include some ideas for healthy food choices for meetings. These lists are simply suggestions and can be mixed and matched to create a delicious meal full of nutrients and variety. Remember to include an abundance of fruits and vegetables to help keep attendees focused and full of energy. Also note that condiments and smaller portion sizes can make or break a healthy meal! A sample menu is included in the Appendix; however, *please feel free to be creative* when planning a healthy meal for a workplace meeting!

## Snacks and Light Refreshments

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- Bite-sized fruits and vegetables in-season like grapes, cherries, strawberries, baby carrots, cherry tomatoes, and broccoli florets
- Whole, fresh fruits like apples or bananas.
- Cut-up fresh fruits including honeydew melon, cantaloupe, and watermelon.
- Pre-packaged fruit cups and dried fruits, which can provide a tasty treat when refrigeration is not available
- Cut-up fresh vegetables like celery, squash, and bell peppers, served with low-fat or fat-free dips
- Nonfat or low-fat dips or hummus
- Low-fat pretzels or popcorn
- Low-fat frozen yogurt
- Baked tortilla chips and salsa



## Beverages

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Serve beverages that are low-calorie, low-fat or have no added sugar such as:

- Water: sparkling, bottled, spring or calorie free flavored water
- 100% fruit or vegetable juice, 8 oz. servings or less
- Regular and decaffeinated coffee or tea
- Nonfat or low-fat milk



## Breakfast and Brunch

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- Include a variety of seasonal or local fresh fruit
- Flavored nonfat or fat-free yogurt
- Bagels should be 3 1/2 inch diameter or less. Serve with low-fat cream cheese, jam or jelly
- Small or mini muffins, fruit bread or fruit and nut granola bars—try to find options with 5 g of fat or less per serving



## Lunch and Dinner

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- Include a variety of seasonal or local fresh fruit
- Broth- or vegetable-based low sodium soups
- 100% whole grain breads
- Vegetable sandwiches or a sandwich tray with lots of fresh veggies, sliced low-fat cheese, lean meats (chicken, turkey, fish) and low-fat spreads
- Low-fat sandwich spreads and condiments
- Salads should contain a variety of vegetables and fruits, low-fat dressing on the side
- Pastas with olive oil, tomato or other vegetable-based sauces



- Vegetarian alternatives such as bean-based soups and casseroles or vegetable lasagna
- Serve entrees and side dishes with tasty beans, peas and lentils
- Choose foods that are baked, broiled, poached, grilled, roasted or steamed
- Provide at least two vegetables with every meal, seasoned with fresh herbs

## Ideas for Fun, Safe Physical Activities at Workplace Meetings

*Meeting breaks are great ways for workers to get some physical activity built into their day. Physical activity during meetings sustains participant focus and attention. An activity leader does not have to be a certified exercise instructor to lead a physical activity break, they simply need to have fun and remember to be safe.*



### A Physical Activity Meeting Break IS:

- Completely voluntary!
- 3-10 minutes long, gets muscles moving and the heart pumping (refer to pages 6-7 for examples).
- Done at each individual's pace, does not cause pain and is meant to be comfortable.
- An energizer for the rest of the meeting!

### A Physical Activity Meeting Break does NOT need to:

- Make participants sweat.
- Cause any pain or discomfort.
- Be led by a professional or an organization.

These guidelines are simply suggestions. They offer easy ways to incorporate physical activity into meetings and are not all-inclusive. Some of the tips below may need to be adjusted based on special consideration for employees with physical limitations (see Appendix for suggestions). Please *be creative* with integrating physical activity into meetings – just remember to stay safe and have fun!



## Short Meetings

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- Encourage attendees to use the stairs, if possible. Work with the facility to place signs near the elevators showing where the stairs are located.
- Schedule a brief activity, 3-10 minutes, before the meeting starts and at its conclusion. Some examples, that can be done seated or standing are:
  - Slowly stretch neck, shoulders, arms, hands, legs and feet. Avoid bouncing or jerking movements.
  - Move arms, head or torso in slow circles.
  - March in place or pump arms up and down.

## Half-Day Meetings

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- Choose a location where participants can safely and easily take a walk. Provide this information to participants in meeting materials.
- Schedule brief activity breaks every 2 hours. Participants can walk around on their own, or someone can lead interested participants in a brief physical activity. Consider labeling this time as a “Stretch Break,” or “Walk Break,” etc. to cue participants to action.



## Multi-Day Meetings



- Choose a location that has a fitness facility or access to one. Include this information in materials that are sent to participants.
- Organize early morning physical activity opportunities. These may include, but are not limited to: group walks, jogs, runs or classes such as yoga or pilates. Include this information in agendas or meeting schedules. Remember to select safe and easily accessible routes if participants engage in a group walk, jog or run.
- Encourage networking by suggesting people take a walk together, either in the conference center or outside, and talk about their common interests.
- Look for places where participants can walk to dinner, shop or enjoy other forms of entertainment. Provide this information in the pre-meeting materials.
- If participants plan on eating out as a group, look for a local restaurant within walking distance. Remember to select a safe and easily accessible route so that all may participate.
- Provide participants with maps of nearby attractions and walking trails.

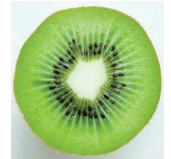


# APPENDIX

## I. Sample Menu A

### Breakfast

- Assorted bagels, including wheat, oat and fruit options
- Low-fat cream cheese and spreads
- Whole grain cereal and nonfat milk
- Low-fat or nonfat yogurt with granola and/or fruit



### Lunch

- Vegetable platter with low-fat dip
- Bean or broth-based low salt soup
- Lean turkey/veggie/tuna rollups
- Salad with low-fat dressing on the side
- Fruit kabobs



### Dinner

- Baked chicken, seasoned with herbs rather than salt
- Spinach salad with low-fat dressing on the side
- Baked sweet potato
- Whole grain rolls with nonfat or low-fat spread



### Snacks & Desserts

- Fruit and vegetable platters
- Unsalted pretzels
- Low-fat, no sugar added frozen yogurt (keep portion size in mind!)



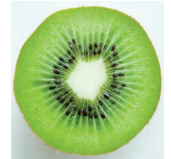


# APPENDIX

## I. Sample Menu B

### Breakfast

- Vegetable omelets cooked with low-fat methods or without egg yolk
- Mini muffins with low-fat spreads
- Cut up fresh fruit and low-fat yogurt dip
- Nonfat or 1% milk



### Lunch

- Grilled or baked chicken sandwich on whole grain bread
- Sliced seasonal fruit
- Green salad with oil and vinegar dressing on the side
- Vegetable platter with low-fat dip



### Dinner

- Baked pork chops, seasoned with herbs rather than salt
- Steamed seasonal vegetables
- Brown rice
- Green salad with low-fat or nonfat dressing on the side
- Whole grain rolls with low-fat spread



### Snacks & Desserts

- Air popped popcorn with no added butter or salt
- Fresh fruit with low-fat or nonfat yogurt topping
- Sugar free angel food cake with fresh strawberries



# APPENDIX

## III. Special Nutrition Considerations

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### A. How to Accommodate Those with Specific Dietary Needs:

- Give participants the opportunity to share any dietary needs or restrictions (vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free, allergies, sugar-free, etc.) before the event and make sure to pass this information on to the meal provider.
- Ask the meal provider about lower-fat or fat-free preparation methods.
- Minimize food served in oil/with high sodium

### B. Other Menu Considerations:

- Talk to the meal provider about including seasonal or local produce when possible.
- Label nutrition information when possible, in alignment with FDA regulations.
- Provide small or appetizer sized plates to encourage participants to eat smaller portion sizes.
- Choose low or nonfat and low salt condiments (salad dressings, ketchup, mustards, etc.) and serve them on the side.

## APPENDIX

### III. Special Physical Activity Considerations

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#### A. How to Accommodate Those with Physical Limitations:

- There are no rules regarding how to assist people with physical limitations in participating in physical activity. The most important thing is to listen to the individual's needs and never pre-judge his or her requirements.
- Below are two examples of how to accommodate participants with physical limitations.
  - When planning walking activities, choose routes with sidewalks of ample width and that include many curb cuts so that those with mobility devices can participate.
  - If an activity does not work for everyone's abilities, it might just need a minor modification – such as slowing down the pace, or sitting rather than standing - so that everyone can participate.
- Be creative when planning activities so that all can participate!

#### B. Other Physical Activity Considerations:

- Contact a local gym, wellness or fitness center to see if they would be willing to send an instructor to lead activities.
- Consider adding a reminder in registration materials for participants to bring or wear comfortable shoes and/or clothing to the meeting or conference.

# APPENDIX

## IV. Tips on Leading a Physical Activity Break

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### Simple Instructional Tips on How to Lead a Physical Activity Break

- Physical activity can occur anywhere – inside the meeting room, outside the meeting room, outside the building or even around the table and in a chair!
- Ensure that each participant has sufficient space and clearance in order to avoid injury.
- Advise participants to do only what is comfortable and to stop immediately if they feel any pain or discomfort.
- Make sure that attendees know participation is completely voluntary. There is no pressure to join in.

# APPENDIX

## IV. References

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2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans

<http://www.health.gov/paguidelines/>

2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans

[www.cnpp.usda.gov/dietaryguidelines.htm](http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/dietaryguidelines.htm)

American Cancer Society Workplace Solutions

[http://www.acsworkplacesolutions.com/wpsPDFs/MeetingWell\\_GuideBook\\_F251300.pdf](http://www.acsworkplacesolutions.com/wpsPDFs/MeetingWell_GuideBook_F251300.pdf)

California 5 a Day – Be Active! Worksite Program

[http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cpns/Documents/Network-FV-WP\\_HealthyMeetingPolicies.pdf](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cpns/Documents/Network-FV-WP_HealthyMeetingPolicies.pdf)

Eat Smart Move More North Carolina

[http://www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/HealthyMeetingGuide/Texts/ES\\_Hlthy\\_Mtg\\_Guide\\_HiRez.pdf](http://www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/HealthyMeetingGuide/Texts/ES_Hlthy_Mtg_Guide_HiRez.pdf)

Mass in Motion

<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dph/com-health/nutrition-phys-activity/healthy-meeting-event-guide.pdf>

New York State Department of Health Center for Community Health Guidelines for Healthy Meetings

<http://www.health.ny.gov/community/disability/docs/guidelines.pdf>

USDA Choose MyPlate

[www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov)