



Healthy Options WA

Tips to promote and
sell green items



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Health**

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Supporting healthy choices

Overview: Healthy Options WA Policy

The [Healthy Options WA: Food and Nutrition Policy for WA Health Services and Facilities](#) (the Policy) aims to maintain and improve the health of staff and the broader community by providing health care environments that support and model nutritious and healthy eating options.

The Policy applies to all WA Health Services and Facilities (hospitals) and includes:

- » food and drink outlets under the control or management of WA Health:
 - » cafes, canteens and kiosks
 - » vending machines
 - » ward trolleys
- » professional and business catering
- » fundraising initiatives, events and prizes.

The Policy uses a ‘traffic light’ system to classify food and drinks, based on their nutrient content and alignment with the Australian Dietary Guidelines. Food and drinks are classified as Green, Amber or Red as shown in Table 1:

Table 1

Category	Description
GREEN Fill the menu	These are the healthiest choices because they are excellent sources of important nutrients and represent one or more of the five food groups needed for optimum health and wellbeing. They are low in saturated fat, added sugar and salt. Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » breads and cereals, preferably wholegrain » fruit, vegetables and legumes » plain water » reduced fat milk (300mL or less) » 99% fruit juice (250mL or less)
AMBER Select carefully	These have some nutritional value but contain moderate levels of saturated fat, added sugar and/or salt and can contribute to excess energy intake. These need to be chosen carefully and eaten in moderation. Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » full fat milk of any volume » 99% fruit juice (greater than 250mL) and diet drinks » small fruit muffins » savoury foods (e.g. reduced fat and salt varieties of pies and pastries) » lean ham.
RED Only occasionally	These are energy dense and have little nutritional value. Most are high in saturated fat, added sugar and/or salt and can contribute to excess energy intake. These should only be eaten occasionally. Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » all deep fried food » soft drinks, energy drinks, sports drinks » chocolate and lollies » iced cakes » premium ice-creams (e.g. chocolate coated).

For further information visit: [‘Commonly supplied food and drink guide’](#) (available on the Healthy Options website)

Policy requirements

There are three main areas of Policy compliance.

Offer, display and promotion

Offer - means offered for sale; relates to the total range and number of different items of food and drink options available.

Display - this is the area or space within the outlet that is available to place foods and drinks on view to customers.

Promotion is the active or passive marketing of food and drinks. Examples of promotion can be found on page 6.

All outlets must ensure that they **offer**:

- » a minimum of 50% Green food and drinks
- » no more than 20% Red food and drinks
- » the remainder to be Amber food and drinks.

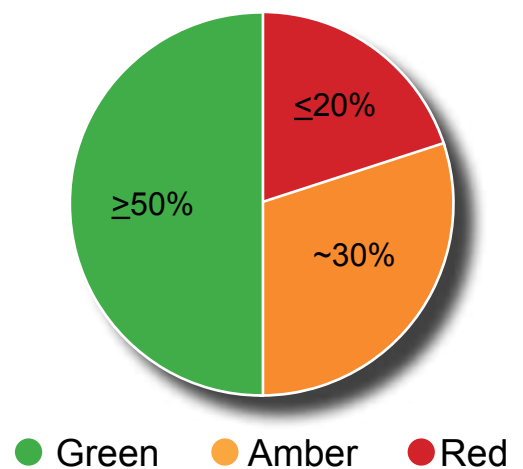
All outlets must also ensure that they **display**:

- » a minimum of 50% Green food and drinks
- » no more than 20% Red food and drinks
- » the remainder to be Amber food and drinks.

All outlets must also ensure that they **promote**:

- » only Green food and drinks.

Figure 1: Offer and display requirements



The Policy requires that outlets only promote Green food and drinks. Promotion has shown to have a small but significant effect on food and drink sales.

From lighting, temperature and sound, to price, placement and portion size, there are a complex mix of factors influencing what, when, how and why we choose the food and drinks that we do.

Making small changes or 'nudges' to these factors in a food and drink outlet represents an ideal opportunity to positively influence the health of customers. These nudges are small, cheap and easy to implement. Over time, these small effects can become significant, while still ensuring that customers maintain control over their choices¹.

Some simple ways to promote healthier items include:

- » rearranging healthier Green items to be at eye level leads to increased sales - 'eye level is buy level'
- » using 'colour coded' green labels to promote Green items
- » list menu items you want to encourage customers to purchase at the top or bottom of the menu - people tend to remember the top two items on a list and the bottom item³
- » using effective descriptions of menu items to help improve perception of quality and value. For example, descriptions can be linked to the geographical (e.g. Thai) or sensory qualities (e.g. fresh, crisp) of the item
- » ensuring that the quality of the menu item consistently meets the description.

Top tip: A food item at the beginning or the end of a menu increases its popularity by 20%, compared to placing it in the middle³.

Case study

In a hospital cafeteria intervention in the US, traffic light colour coding was assigned to all food and drink items according to their nutritional value. After two years, sales of Red foods had decreased by 4% and Red drinks decreased by 9%. Sales of Green foods had increased by 5% and Green drinks by 8%⁴.

Simple swaps

Promotion can include anything from a 'specials' board advertising 'vegetable soup of the day' in a cafe, canteen or kiosk, or even signage featuring bottled water on a vending machine. Whilst these may be subtle promotions they still contribute to overall compliance with the Policy.

Simple swaps for vending machines

'Skins'

Swap vending machine 'skins' featuring soft drink for water - as pictured at Royal Perth Hospital.

Let the products do the talking!

Opt for a refrigerated, plain vending machine (no branding) where possible and stock with a range of Green products such as sandwiches, fresh fruit, reduced fat yoghurt and plain water.



Simple swaps for canteens, cafes and kiosks

Packaging

Swap traditional packaging (e.g. paper or foil) for clear containers to showcase the healthy options inside such as salads, sandwiches, rolls, wraps and fruit salad - as pictured at Bentley Health Service.

'Special' boards and signs

Use menu boards and chalk boards to advertise daily Green specials.

Digital menu boards

Use digital menu boards to advertise daily menu items and healthy eating tips. Creating partnerships with the dietitian onsite can ensure that your healthy eating tips are based on the most current information.

These tips could even be printed and displayed as table talkers or shelf signage.



Portion size

We rely on packages and plate size to tell us what is 'normal' or 'appropriate' to consume as we do not usually actively decide how much we eat². It is also normal to consume the food that we are presented with in its entirety. It's no surprise that increasing the portion or package size of food and drinks can increase overall consumption².

Top tip: increase the portion or package size of Green foods and drinks, such as fruit, vegetables and plain water, and decrease the package size of Red items such as hot chips or soft drink.

Price

Price is important to customers, so where possible, lower the price of Green foods and raise the price of Red foods.

Lowering the price of healthier Green foods and raising the price of less healthy Amber or Red alternatives can shift purchases towards the healthier options⁵.

Top tip: price healthy products lower than less healthy products to increase their appeal.

Case study

Results from a cafeteria intervention showed that when prices for fresh fruit and vegetables were reduced, there was a four-fold increase in consumption of these products. When sale prices returned to pre-intervention levels, sales returned to normal⁶.



Product positioning

Accessibility to food and drinks shape how much individuals consume. Modest changes to the positioning of food and drinks, such as placing the product out of sight, can influence intake without having to modify the actual choice on offer.

People are more likely to consume less if there is substantial effort required to access the food or drink for example, having to ask for an item that is not visible on display.

Top tip: if you want to increase the popularity of a Green item, make it easier to access by placing in a prominent position that will be easily recognised by customers.

Case Study - Alfred Health, Victoria

Changes to product positioning was trialled at The Alfred, a large hospital in Victoria, with extremely positive results.

When?

In September 2014, a willing retailer participated in a two week trial.

What happened?

Red drinks were removed from display and placed out of sight beneath the counter i.e. still available but not on view to customers.

Some of the Red drinks included sugar sweetened drinks (soft drinks, sports drinks and iced tea) and energy drinks.

The results?

The immediate impact showed the number of Red drinks sold decreased however, overall sales (income) remained steady. So much so that the retailer continued the trial as no negative effect on profit was evident.

Six months later, overall drink sales also remained steady yet customers were making healthier choices, choosing Green and Amber drinks instead of Red.

It was a 'win-win' all round, with the retailer, customers and the hospital all happy with the results.

Source: 'A green light for healthy consumption'. Healthy choices: food and drink guidelines for Victorian public hospitals. Alfred Health, 2015

Availability

Modifying what is available has been shown to change consumers' choice in a healthier direction.

Allocating more shelf space to healthier items e.g. Green food and drinks helps to increase sales as visibility is increased². Setting up a separate display of products e.g. Green items has also been shown to draw attention to 'new' or 'special' products¹.

Top tip: to promote new or existing Green items on your menu, set up a separate display to draw attention to these products.

While simple nudges can be effective to get the ball rolling, some hospitals might want to take promoting Green food and drinks a step further.

Taste-testing activities can be done with your customers to determine the potential of new products in cafes, canteens, kiosks, vending machines or even ward trolleys.

Suggestion boxes could also be utilised to collect feedback from customers.

Implement a 'Green frequent customer card' (loyalty system) so that every time a customer chooses a Green item, their card is stamped, and a full card leads to a free Green food or drink.

References

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More information?

Visit the [Healthy Options website](http://www.healthyoptions.health.wa.gov.au)
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