

Healthy Events & Meetings

Guidelines

The Anne Arundel County Department of Health, along with its community partners, aims to promote healthy eating and active living. A key part of this goal is ensuring that all county residents have access to healthy food and beverage choices and to physical activity. These guidelines, which apply the ideas recommended by the Dietary and Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, can be used when planning and purchasing food for any event or meeting.

The 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 Physical Activity Guidelines are designed to provide information and guidance on the types and amounts of physical activities that provide substantial benefit for Americans.

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



Events and meetings offer excellent opportunities to provide healthy foods and beverages and options for physical activities to participants.

Ideas for Healthy Foods and Beverages at Events and Meetings

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 events and meetings is a simple way to help keep attendees healthy.

Please reference the Appendix for other menu considerations.

A Healthy Meal Is:

- Well balanced — it includes fruits, vegetables, protein, whole grains and dairy. Visit 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 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 events and 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 an event or meeting!



Snacks and Light Refreshments

- 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.
- Plain popcorn or whole-wheat crackers or pita chips.
- Baked tortilla chips and salsa.



Beverages

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

- Include a variety of seasonal or local fresh fruit.
- Flavored nonfat or fat-free yogurt.
- 100% whole grain mini bagels. Serve with low-fat cream cheese, jam or jelly.
- Whole grain mini muffins, fruit bread, or fruit and nut granola bars — try to find options with 5 grams of fat or less per serving.

Lunch and Dinner

- Include a variety of seasonal or local fresh fruit and vegetables.
- 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 containing a variety of vegetables and fruits. Serve with 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 seasoned with fresh herbs at every meal.



Ideas for Fun, Safe Physical Activities at Events and Meetings

Breaks are great ways for attendees to get some physical activity built into their day. Physical activity during events and meetings sustains participant focus and attention. An activity leader does not have to be a certified exercise instructor to lead a physical activity break, participants simply need to have fun and remember to be safe. These guidelines are simply suggestions. They offer easy ways to incorporate physical activity into events and meetings and are not all-inclusive. Some of the tips below may need to be adjusted based on special consideration for participants with physical limitations (see Appendix for suggestions). Be creative with integrating physical activity into your event or meeting. Include information about physical activity opportunities (e.g., walking routes, scheduled stretch breaks) in materials that are sent to attendees in advance of the event or meeting.



A Physical Activity Break Is:

- Completely voluntary!
- 3-10 minutes long to get muscles moving and the heart pumping.
- Done at each individual's pace, does not cause pain and is meant to be comfortable.
- An energizer for the rest of the event or meeting!

A Physical Activity Break does NOT need to:

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

Short Events and Meetings

- 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 event or 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 Events and Meetings

- Choose a location where attendees can safely and easily take a walk.
- Schedule brief activity breaks every 2 hours. Participants can walk around independently or someone can lead interested participants in a brief physical activity. Consider labeling this time as a “Stretch Break” or “Walk Break” to cue participants to action.

Multi-Day Events and Meetings

- Choose a location where attendees have access to physical activity opportunities, e.g., a park, walking trail or fitness facility.
- 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. 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 inside or outside, and have them talk about their common interests.
- Look for places where attendees can walk to dinner, shop or enjoy other forms of entertainment.
- 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

1. Sample Menu A

Breakfast

- 100% whole grain mini bagels
- Low-fat cream cheese and spreads
- Whole grain cereal and nonfat milk
- Low-fat or nonfat yogurt with granola and/or fruit

Lunch

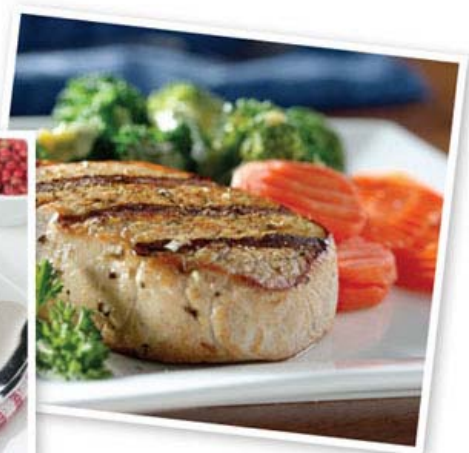
- Vegetable platter with low-fat dip
- Bean or broth-based low-salt soup
- Lean turkey/veggie/tuna rollups on whole grain tortilla
- Salad with low-fat dressing on the side
- Fruit kabobs

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
- Baked tortilla chips and salsa



1. Sample Menu B

Breakfast

- Vegetable omelets cooked with low-fat methods or without egg yolk
- Whole grain 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 full of a variety of colorful veggies 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

2. Special Nutrition Considerations

A. How to Accommodate Those with Specific Dietary Needs:

- Give attendees the opportunity to share any dietary needs or restrictions (e.g., vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free, allergies, sugar-free) before the event or meeting 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 and 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.

3. Special Physical Activity Considerations

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:

- See if a local gym or a wellness or fitness center would be willing to send an instructor to lead activities.
- Consider adding a reminder in registration materials for attendees to bring or wear comfortable shoes and clothing to the event or meeting.



4. Tips on Leading a Physical Activity Break

- 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.

5. Resources

Learn To Live, Anne Arundel County Department of Health
www.LearnToLiveHealthy.org

Healthy Anne Arundel Coalition
www.HealthyAnneArundel.org

Choose MyPlate, United States Department of Agriculture
www.ChooseMyPlate.gov

2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans
www.health.gov/paguidelines

2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans
www.cnpp.usda.gov/dietaryguidelines.htm



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