



Nutrition Competitions

Individuals who eat healthy, balanced meals are more likely to be happy, hardworking and enthusiastic about their job. Eating nutritiously creates a community of heart healthy people while also keeping health care costs low for Penn State. This intervention of nutrition competitions can make eating healthy more enjoyable. It promotes the healthier choice of tasty fresh food as opposed to synthetic and sugary substitutes. Budget ranges depending on size of department and purchases. Budget can range from free implementation to \$100+.

How to Implement

- Reserve a room during the lunch hour to discuss with employees/students the importance and the benefits of choosing healthy, tasty options.
- Utilize online handouts and tools to demonstrate an appropriate portion size and balanced plate. ChooseMyPlate.gov is a perfect place for individuals to explore and build a “plate” according to their needs.
- Distribute food journals (\$10 each) and encourage your employees/students to write down what they are eating and drinking, keeping them accountable for their choices. Or have individuals download a free app to track their eating habits.
- Use signage in cafeterias to encourage healthier choices. Examples including putting a heart next to heart healthy options and displaying a calorie and sugar comparison chart (i.e. soda versus water). Graphics and signage are free at ChooseMyPlate.gov.
- Provide an incentive to the department that has the best eating habits, demonstrated by their journal. The incentive could be providing the department with a cooking class demonstration (\$70 per person).
- Have individuals email you their tracking sheets that state if they did or did not meet the goal.
 - Other Ideas:
 - Start by challenging participants to consume adequate fruits, vegetables (5+ servings/day). Not consuming sugar sweetened beverages, only consuming whole grains- not refined grains, only lean proteins- not high fat proteins, eliminating fried food, etc.
 - Have teams choose their favorite charities. Whoever wins gets a portion or all of the prize money forwarded to the chosen beneficiary.
 - Each week that an employee/student meets their goal, give their team some money for their charity.

***Contact PRO Wellness for logistical assistance.**



Evaluation

To assess the impact of the intervention:

- How many are participating in the nutrition competitions?
- Exposure and awareness- Is the signage hanging in a visible area? Are the signs hung where people purchase/choose their meals?
- Are participants utilizing the free nutrition apps, food journals and/or websites?
- Send out a short anonymous survey asking if any employee or students have any successes they would like to share with the group, including weight loss, better eating habits and feeling more energized.
- Incentive Options:
 - Cooking classes: price varies, \$70 per person
 - Healthy cookbooks: price varies, \$15-20 per book
 - Local grocery store gift cards: price varies
 - Catered office lunch: price varies
 - Donations to favorite charities

Additional Resources:

- Free nutrition and weight loss apps include My Fitness Pal, Fooducate, Shop Well and Lifesum
- NutritionFacts.org provides you with nutritional information about everything you are putting into your body.
- FoodInsight.org provides newsletters and articles for employees to stay up-to date on the latest information regarding wellness.
- Looking for healthy recipes, try MyNewRoots.com!



Example Pre and Post Questions:

- Would you say that in general your health is:
 - Excellent
 - Very good
 - Good
 - Fair
 - Poor
 - Don't know

- In general, how healthy is your overall diet?
 - Excellent
 - Very Good
 - Good
 - Fair
 - Poor
 - Don't Know
 - Refused

- Not including juices, how often did you eat fruit? You can tell me times per day, times per week or times per month.
 - Per Month
 - Per Week
 - Per Day
 - Don't Know
 - Refused
 - Number of times: _____

- How often did you eat other vegetables? You can tell me times per day, week or month.
 - Per Day
 - Per Week
 - Per Month
 - Don't Know
 - Refused
 - Number of times: _____

- During the past 7 days, how many meals did you get that were prepared away from home in places such as restaurants, fast food places, food stands, grocery stores, or from vending machines?
 - How many of those meals did you get from a fast-food or pizza place?

- During the past 30 days, how often did you eat frozen meals or frozen pizzas?

- "In the last 12 months, we worried whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more." For your household, was that:
 - Sometimes true
 - Never true
 - Often true



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- "The food we bought didn't last and we didn't have money to get more." For your household, was that:
 - Often true
 - Sometimes true
 - Never true

- All in all, how satisfied would you say you are with your job?
 - Very satisfied
 - Somewhat satisfied
 - Not too satisfied
 - Not at all satisfied

- How satisfied are you with current wellness programs?
 - Very satisfied
 - Satisfied
 - Neutral
 - Dissatisfied
 - Very dissatisfied