

Healthy Food and Drink in NSW Health Facilities for Staff and Visitors

Summary This Guideline aims to increase the availability of healthy foods and drinks to staff and visitors in NSW Health facilities. It assists NSW Health facility managers to implement healthy food and drink best practice. It applies to cafes, kiosks and carts, vending machines, and catering services. It is set out in 3 elements: the Food and Drink Benchmark; local implementation; and monitoring and evaluation.

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Guideline Summary

Eating too many Occasional (less healthy) foods and not enough Everyday (healthier) food is a major contributor to nearly 3 in 5 adults and nearly one in 4 children in NSW having overweight or obesity. This Guideline aims to increase the availability of healthy food and drinks to staff and visitors in NSW Health facilities.

This Guideline assists NSW Health facilities to implement healthy food and drink best-practice guidelines. Food and drinks from food outlets such as cafes, kiosks and carts, vending machines, catering services and volunteer-run outlets are included.

Key Principles

This Guideline provides evidence-based guidance and is structured around:

- A Food and Drink Benchmark designed to provide staff and visitors with choice, including:
 - increasing the availability of Everyday food and drink options
 - decreasing the availability of Occasional food and drink options, and
 - avoiding offering sugar sweetened drinks altogether.
- Local implementation to achieve the best results, supported by materials and tools.
- Monitoring and evaluation to regularly track achievements and improve results.

Local Health District Senior Executives should determine where local adaptations are required in their health facilities where foods and drinks are provided to staff and visitors.

To assist implementation of this Guideline, materials and tools are available:

- Practical implementation tools for stakeholders, for example Point of Sale promotional materials.
- Healthy Food Finder for local teams and retailers to look up healthy food and drink products which meet the Food and Drink Benchmark.
- The Healthy Food Information Service (phone and email service) to support NSW Health staff, retailers, and volunteers to implement this Guideline.
- Population Health Information Management System Nutrition to manage state-wide monitoring data.
- Procurement portal with contract templates and guidance for incorporating healthy food and drink clauses in retail leases.

Revision History

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GL2024_011 September-2024	Deputy Secretary, Population and Public Health & Chief Health Officer	Updated Guideline with no significant changes.
GL2017_012 June-2017	Secretary	New Guideline. Replaces PD2009_081
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1. Background

In NSW, approximately 3 in 5 adults and one in 4 children in NSW are above a healthy weight [1]. Over the past 10 years, rates of overweight and obesity in children have remained stable. In adults, rates of overweight have remained stable, but rates of obesity have increased [2].

Overweight and obesity has an impact on the health of our population and the economy of Australia [3]. Some 38% of the disease burden is preventable and due to modifiable risk factors such as smoking, overweight or obesity, high blood pressure or poor diet [4].

Unhealthy eating is a preventable risk factor for overweight and obesity and associated chronic diseases [4]. Yet when surrounded by unhealthy food and drinks at work, at the shops, and in public places like hospitals, making a healthy choice can often be challenging.

NSW Health continues to be committed to helping the people of NSW achieve and maintain a healthy weight [5]. Preventing overweight and obesity is a complex issue which requires a range of approaches [2]. NSW Health has had a variety of initiatives in place for adults and children since 2010 [6] [7]. The NSW Healthy Eating and Active Living Strategy 2022-2032 outlines actions for preventing overweight and obesity and achieving better health outcomes over the next decade [2].

As part of a long-term approach to the prevention of overweight and obesity, NSW Health has been working to make healthy food and drink an easy choice in our health facilities since 2017. By choosing to create a healthy food and drink offering in NSW Health facilities, we seek to be a model for other government agencies and settings to follow.

1.1. About this document

This Guideline is a set of best-practice principles for NSW Health facilities to provide healthy food and drinks in their food and drink outlets.

This Guideline assists NSW Health facilities to increase the availability of healthy food and drinks to staff and visitors in NSW Health facilities.

This Guideline applies to food outlets where food and drinks are available to staff and visitors in NSW Health facilities. It applies to all food and drinks, including packaged food and drinks and those which are prepared on- and off-site. This Guideline does not apply to patient food services, medicines, or infant products such as infant formula.

The food and drink outlets include:

- cafes and cafeterias
- kiosks and carts
- food and/or drink vending machines
- convenience stores and newsagents
- other leased retail premises that sell food and drinks such as florists and pharmacies
- catering provided at functions, meetings and special events such as meetings with external partners or workshops.

This Guideline also applies to volunteer-run versions of the food outlets listed above.

Those who negotiate and manage retail space contracts with private vendors, should include applicable clauses in contracts and licenses which meet this Guideline.

This Guideline does not apply to:

- In-patients, for whom nutrition is frequently a part of their clinical management. The nutritional quality of meals and snacks served to in-patients is guided by the NSW Health Policy Directive *Nutrition Care* ([PD2017_041](#)) [8].
- Food and drinks that staff or visitors bring from home such as their lunch or a birthday cake to share.
- Food prepared in a NSW Health facility for outside client groups such as recipients of home meal delivery services or nursing home residents.
- Temporary and ad-hoc fundraising activities conducted in NSW Health facilities such as periodic food stalls.

This Guideline provides evidence-based guidance and is structured around:

- A Food and Drink Benchmark designed to provide choice while increasing the availability of everyday food and drink options and decreasing the availability of Occasional food and drink options, and avoiding offering sugar sweetened drinks altogether (see [Section 2](#)).
- Local implementation to achieve the best results, supported by materials and tools.
- Monitoring and evaluation to regularly track achievements and improve results.

Modelling the provision of healthy food and drink in NSW Health facilities, can be achieved by:

- Increasing the product availability of healthy options by providing a large proportion of Everyday food and drinks.
- Promoting product quality using the Health Star Rating System achieving 3.5 stars or higher as an indicator of the healthier packaged options.
- Making smaller portion sizes more widely available for some Everyday and all Occasional food and drinks.
- Using marketing techniques to ensure the Everyday products are in the right place at a favourable price and are promoted, while limiting the promotion of Occasional food and drinks, including those in meal deals.

This Guideline should be read in conjunction with the tools and resources which support stakeholder implementation, such as [Frequently Asked Questions](#) and [Point of Sale promotional materials](#).

1.2. Key definitions

Cafés, cafeterias	A food outlet that sells food and drinks that can be hot, chilled, ambient, packaged, fresh, and frozen. The offering includes meals and seating for customers. Food and drinks are mainly consumed on the premises.
Catering for staff functions	This refers to catering for activities in the health facility arranged for staff purposes. For example, internal staff meetings, meetings with external partners, workshops, conferences, planning days, social events, workforce development activities, professional development by an external organisation and lectures.
Convenience stores and newsagent	A food outlet that sells food and drinks that may be hot, chilled, ambient, packaged, fresh and frozen. Usually has no seating for customers and are consumed elsewhere.
Everyday food and drinks	<p>Meals, snacks and drinks made from foods in the 5 food groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • vegetables and legumes • fruit • milk, yoghurt and cheese (or plant based alternatives) • lean meats, poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds • grain foods including bread, pasta and rice. <p>Examples include sandwiches, soups, pasta dishes, yoghurt and fruit.</p>
Food outlet	Any situation where food and drinks are offered to staff and visitors in a NSW Health facility. Examples include cafés, cafeterias, kiosks and coffee carts, convenience stores, newsagents, other leased retail premises that sell food or drinks, such as florists and pharmacies, vending machines and catering provided at functions, meetings or special events.
Fundraising	<p>The soliciting or receiving of any money, property or other benefit on a charitable basis on behalf of any part of NSW Health. Temporary and ad hoc fundraising activities are not included in this Guideline. However, this Guideline does apply to volunteer-run outlets that provide a food and drink service to staff and visitors within NSW Health facilities.</p> <p>For staff who would like to run a temporary or ad hoc fundraiser at work for other organisations such as Lions, Rotary or the local</p>

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	<p>school, NSW Health kindly request they support this Guideline by ensuring that a healthy fundraising option is provided.</p>
Health Star Rating System	<p>The Health Star Rating is a nationally recognised front-of-pack labelling system developed by the Australian State and Territory governments in collaboration with industry, public health and consumer groups. The overall nutritional profile of packaged food is rated from 0.5 star to 5 stars. The more stars, the healthier the choice (see the Health Star Rating System website).</p>
Kiosks and coffee carts	<p>A food outlet that sells food and drinks that may be hot, chilled, ambient, packaged fresh, and frozen. Usually has limited or no seating for customers. Food and drinks are usually not consumed on the premises.</p>
Milk drinks	<p>Milk drinks are drinks where the predominant ingredient is dairy milk or plant-based milks with added calcium such as soy, almond or rice milk.</p>
NSW Health facilities	<p>Any building, including the grounds of the building, which is managed by NSW Health, for example the building and campus of hospitals, community health centres or clinics, rehabilitation centres and offices.</p>
Occasional food and drinks	<p>Food and drinks mostly high in saturated fat, sugars or salt often with little nutritional value. They are not needed as part of a healthy diet and should be eaten only occasionally, and in small amounts. For example, pies, chips, cakes, sweet muffins, and confectionery.</p>
Other retail	<p>A food outlet whose core business is non-food and drink, but does sell a relatively small range of food and drink items, for example chemist, gift shops and florist.</p>
Packaged ready-to-eat meals	<p>Meals which either require no further preparation before eating, or which require only heating before they are served. Packaged ready-to-eat meals may be frozen, chilled or shelf-stable. They are sold to the customer in an individual package.</p>
Sugar-sweetened drinks	<p>Drinks with any sugars added during processing excluding milk drinks. Examples of sources of sugar used to sweeten drinks include sucrose (commonly called sugar), fructose, glucose, honey and fruit juice concentrate.</p> <p>Examples of drinks not classed as a sugar-sweetened drink include water (plain or sparkling), milk, flavoured milk, tea, coffee, ≥99% fruit and vegetable juice.</p>

Vending machines	An automated machine that dispenses food and drinks. The offering may be for food or drinks only, or a combination of both.
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1.3. Supporting NSW Health Strategies and Programs

1.3.1. NSW Health strategies

NSW Health has a range of strategies which support making healthier food and drink choices.

- **NSW Healthy Eating Active Living Strategy 2022-2032** [2] is a whole-of-government strategy to keep people in NSW healthy and well over the next decade by focusing on:
 - Prevention programs and services to support healthy eating and active living.
 - Routine advice on healthy eating and active living as part of clinical care.
 - Social marketing to support behavioural change towards healthy eating and active living.
 - Healthy food and built environments to support healthy eating and active living.
- **Future Health – Guiding the Next Decade of Care in NSW 2022-2032** [5] is NSW Health's strategy for delivering a sustainable health system that delivers outcomes that matter most to patients and the community, is personalised, invests in wellness and is digitally enabled.
- **NSW Regional Health Strategic Plan 2022-2032** [9] is NSW Health's roadmap towards a sustainable, equitable and integrated health system delivering outcomes that matter most to patients and the community in regional, rural and remote NSW.

1.3.2. NSW Health programs and policies

NSW provides programs and policies to support people of NSW to make healthier food and drink choices including:

- **NSW Health Retail Framework** [10] aims to support Local Health Districts (LHDs) and Specialty Networks (SNs) to improve retail services, food and drink offering and patient and staff experience with retail outlets in NSW Health facilities.
- **Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) communications** [11] are NSW Health's social marketing and communications activities to support people to eat healthily and be more active. HEAL communications offer accessible, inclusive and evidence-based information to build healthy habits and help people to access free NSW Health programs, services and tools to support behaviour change. More information is available on the Healthy Eating Active Living [website](#).
- **Get Healthy Service** [12] is a free phone and online health coaching program that helps people make lifestyle changes to improve their health. The service is available to people over 16 years of age living in NSW. University qualified health coaches support people to eat healthy and get active, reach and stay a healthy weight, drink less alcohol or avoid alcohol in pregnancy, and stay active during and after cancer. More

information is available on the Get Healthy Service [website](#). Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.

- **Physical activity and healthy eating programs and policies for children include:**
 - **Munch & Move** [13] is a community engagement and education program to promote and encourage children's healthy eating and physical activity and to reduce small-screen recreation. It gives early childhood educators resources and support for fun, play-based approaches to build healthy eating and physical activity habits in young children. More information is available on the Munch & Move [website](#).
 - **The NSW Healthy School Canteen Strategy** is a joint NSW Department of Education and NSW Health strategy to support student health and wellbeing by promoting and increasing the availability of healthy food and drinks in school canteens. More information is available on the NSW Health [website](#).

2. Food and Drink Benchmark

This Guideline consists of a Food and Drink Benchmark, based on the Australian Dietary Guidelines [14], to guide the provision of healthy food and drink in NSW Health facilities by:

- Promoting and increasing the availability of healthy Everyday food and drink options.
- Decreasing the availability of Occasional food and drink options.
- Supporting water as the best drink choice.
- Removing sugar sweetened drinks from sale.

The Food and Drink Benchmark has 4 focus areas:

- Product Availability
- Product Quality
- Product Size
- Marketing.

Table 1 provides an overview of the underpinning principles of the Food and Drink Benchmark.

The [Toolkit Food and Drink Ready Reckoner](#) translates the Food and Drink Benchmark into specific examples of healthy recommendations for the different types of meals, snacks, and drinks that can be sold.

Table 1. Overview of the Food and Drink Benchmark

Focus Area	Benchmark
Product Availability	Everyday food and drinks make up 75% or more of the total food and drink offerings.
	Occasional food and drinks make up no more than 25% of the total food and drink offering.
	Sugar-sweetened drinks are not sold.
Product Quality	<p>A Health Star Rating of 3.5 Stars and higher applies to some Everyday food and drinks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • breakfast cereals • packaged ready-to-eat meals • muesli and snack bars • lightly salted or flavoured popcorn, nuts, seeds and legume snacks • savoury biscuits • custard • flavoured milk, liquid breakfast drinks and milkshakes/smoothies.
	<p>A Health Star Rating of 3.5 Stars and higher applies to all Occasional food and drinks except:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sweet biscuits, cakes, sweet pastries • desserts • confectionery • diet drinks • ice-cream, frozen yoghurt, and ice-blocks.
Product Size	<p>Portion size limits apply to some Everyday food and drinks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • packaged ready-to-eat meals (450g) • muesli and snack bars (50g) • dried fruit (50g) • lightly salted or flavoured popcorn, legumes, nuts and seeds (50g) • fruit/vegetable juice (400ml) • flavoured milk, milkshakes/smoothies, liquid breakfast drinks and coffee (500ml).
	Portion size limits apply to all Occasional food and drinks.
Marketing	Prominent locations in a food outlet, value pricing, and promotional activities highlight Everyday food and drinks.
	Prominent locations in a food outlet, value pricing, and promotional activities do not highlight Occasional food and drinks.

3. Local Implementation

To achieve the best result for each NSW Health facility, this Guideline promotes local implementation.

How this Guideline and the Food and Drink Benchmark are used, can vary according to the unique circumstances of each NSW Health facility. What works well in one NSW Health facility may not work quite so well in another and may be dependent on locally held contract arrangements.

Senior Executives should determine where local adaptations are required in their health facilities where food and drinks are provided to staff and visitors.

The NSW Ministry of Health assists NSW Health facilities to use this Guideline locally by providing state-wide supporting materials, systems and tools (see [Appendix 1](#)).

4. Monitoring and Evaluation

The *NSW Treasury Policy and Guidelines: Evaluation (TPG22-22)* commits public services to increasing transparency, improving programs and providing a better understanding of their outcomes. [15]

Across the state, NSW Health facilities are asked to monitor food outlets regularly against a set of practices that reflect the Food and Drink Benchmark (see [Section 2](#)).

The NSW Ministry of Health provides practical support for regular monitoring and continuous improvement. This includes a state-wide annual audit.

To monitor local implementation, [Population Health Information Management System Nutrition](#) (PHIMS-Nutrition) (restricted access) is available for NSW Health facilities. PHIMS-Nutrition is an IT system that provides standard tools, processes and reports that enable NSW Health facilities to monitor the progress made towards achieving the recommendations of the Food and Drink Benchmark. Monitoring will be undertaken against the achievement of a set of key practices which are illustrative of the Food and Drink Benchmark.

The results of monitoring are used to evaluate whether implementation of this Guideline has increased the availability of healthy Everyday food and drink options to staff and visitors, and decreased the availability of Occasional food and drink, including the removal of sugar-sweetened drinks from sale.

Evaluating what works well and not so well during local implementation will help build on successes by identifying best practice and better aligning supporting resources with the needs of NSW Health facilities. Communicating the results with retailers helps to identify and agree on strategies for continuous improvement.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

This section outlines the roles and responsibilities of NSW Health to implement this Guideline.

Table 2. Roles and responsibilities

NSW Ministry of Health	NSW Health facilities
Regularly review the Food and Drink Benchmark to ensure it remains evidence-based and feasible to implement.	Actively engage with suppliers and staff to champion positive change.
Create opportunities for NSW Health facilities to share learnings and promote best practice implementation.	Provide executive level support by making available adequate human and financial resources to implement this Guideline.
Lead consultations with large food and drink providers.	Actively engage with suppliers and other stakeholders such as unions and staff to garner their support. Ensure all new, extensions, and renewals of tenders and contracts incorporate the requirements of the policy.
Provide tools, support, and promotional material to help local implementation.	Remove sugar-sweetened drinks from food outlets and work towards the achievement of all practices.
Deliver the state-wide IT system, PHIMS-Nutrition to support implementation and monitoring. Co-ordinate annual state-wide monitoring and reporting.	Use PHIMS-Nutrition to support implementation and provide annual monitoring and reporting data on achievement of the practices.
Evaluate the impact of this Guideline on the availability of healthy food and drink in NSW Health facilities. Evaluate implementation to better align supporting resources with the needs of NSW Health facilities.	Participate in the evaluation process to ensure the policy remains effective.

6. References

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7. Appendices

7.1. Appendix 1: State-wide Supporting Materials, Tools and Systems

The NSW Ministry of Health supports NSW Health facilities to apply this Guideline locally, by providing state-wide supporting material, systems, and tools. Public-facing materials, systems and tools refer to the Guideline as 'a Framework'.

7.1.1. Materials

Commercial guidance

Commercial guidance for the translation of the Food and Drink Benchmark and monitoring and evaluation recommendations into retail lease requirements, for example, review and negotiation of existing and new leases.

Retail lease templates are available from the [NSW Health Procurement Portal](#) (restricted access). The templates set out obligations in relation to this Guideline. Local retail lease agreements will vary, as will the inclusion of healthy food and drink provision in these agreements.

The commercial guidance on steps to implement this Guideline supports property management services with responsibility for tenders, contracts, and the management of retail leases.

Marketing and communication

Marketing and tailored communications to use to explain and promote this Guideline to local staff, retailers, visitors and fundraisers in the NSW Health facility as well as the local community. These are available on the NSW Health [website](#).

Food and drink reckoner

A [Food and Drink Ready Reckoner](#) translates the Food and Drink Benchmark into specific examples of healthy recommendations for the different types of meals, snacks, and drinks that can be sold.

7.1.2. Tools and systems

Healthy Food Finder – a free online food and drink look-up tool for local teams and retailers to identify packaged food and suitable to sell in NSW Health facilities. For more information visit the [Health Food Finder website](#).

The **Healthy Food Information Service** – a phone and email customer service to support NSW health staff, retailers, volunteers to implement this Guideline and provide healthy food and drink choices.

[Population Health Information Management System-Nutrition \(PHIMS-Nutrition\)](#)

(restricted access) – a state-wide IT system to enable NSW Health facilities to monitor progress towards achieving the recommendations of the Food and Drink Benchmark.