

Healthy Beverages



Why Healthier Food?

The way food is produced, processed, packaged, distributed and consumed in the United States has significant impacts on human health. Nationally, the United States spends billions of dollars to treat diet-related, chronic diseases—\$147 billion to treat obesity alone, another \$116 billion to treat diabetes, and hundreds of billions to treat cardiovascular disease and cancer. To improve the health of patients, staff and communities, Healthier Hospitals is teaming up with hospitals to encourage healthy food consumption.

Why Healthy Beverages?

Obesity prevalence in the U.S. is rapidly increasing. Health care institutions throughout the country recognize the urgent need to reduce rates of obesity and chronic illness as well as their associated health care costs. It is well established that sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) contribute to the increased prevalence of obesity and associated chronic diseases that go along with weight gain. The production, consumption and waste associated with sugar-sweetened and bottled beverages have numerous negative environmental consequences that are often overlooked. Alternatively, in the U.S., tap water has been proven to be just as safe, or safer, than its bottled version. By supporting and promoting publicly-owned water infrastructure and reducing access to unhealthy beverages, the health care community can assist in creating a food environment that supports health for both the community it serves and the environment in general.

Goal	Details
Increase access to tap water.	<p>Increase access to tap water by implementing a minimum of 3 of the listed strategies each year for tap water access:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provide and promote reusable beverage containers. ■ Installed filtered water stations, 'spa water' and/or installed water bottle filling stations throughout the facility or in cafeterias. ■ Eliminate bottled water from patient menus and cafeteria. ■ Provide free 'spa water' or pitchers at functions and meetings instead of bottled water. ■ Change the relative price of healthy vs. unhealthy beverages to make healthy choices more affordable and desirable.
Increase the percentage of healthy beverage* purchases for use throughout the hospital (patient, retail, vending and catering).	Increase access to healthy beverages* by achieving annual benchmarks for healthy beverages of (40%, 60%, 80%) of total purchases.

Definitions & Data

***Healthy Beverage Defined:** Water (filtered tap, unsweetened, 100% fruit-infused, seltzer or flavored); 100 percent fruit juice (optimal 4oz serving); 100% vegetable juice (optimal sodium less than 140 mg); Milk (unflavored AND Certified Organic or rBGH-free); Non-dairy milk alternatives (unsweetened); Teas and Coffee (unsweetened with only naturally occurring caffeine). Beverages should be locally- sourced, sustainably-produced and Organic when possible (See Definitions for Local/Sustainable). Beverages should be dispensed by tap or fountain AND reusable beverage containers should be encouraged when possible. Most facilities offer beverages in five areas: retail (cafeteria), vending, catering, patient services and onsite contract venues (such as Subway or Dunkin Donuts).

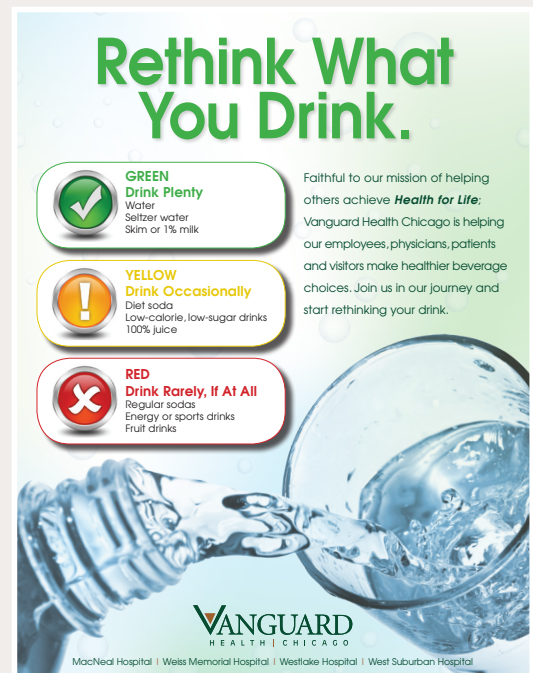
Healthy Beverage Percentage

Percent dollars spent on healthy beverages = dollars spent on healthy beverages / dollars spent on all beverages

Success Story

MacNeal Hospital, Weiss Memorial Hospital, West Suburban Medical Center, Westlake Hospital (Chicago, IL)

Since 2012, MacNeal Hospital, Weiss Memorial Hospital, West Suburban Medical Center, and Westlake Hospital eliminated SSBs from patient meals, cafeterias, vending machines, meetings, catering services, gift shops, and a Walgreens on site. Pricing and placement techniques were used to increase sales of water, seltzer water, unsweetened tea, and one percent and skim milk in cafeterias and vending machines. At MacNeal Hospital, large jugs of fruit-infused water were offered outside of the cafeteria, and two public water fountains tallied how many gallons of water were distributed in total. Initially, a Healthy Beverage Work Group was created to assess the beverage environment, taste-test new options, and ultimately decide upon ten healthier beverages to serve. Educational materials explaining Boston Public Health Commission's traffic light approach, along with educational sessions in the cafeteria and sugar displays, were used to inform employees and the public about the changes. There was no drop in overall revenue after the change, and employees experienced health benefits, including weight loss. Community partnerships were strengthened, and the hospitals received positive media responses.



Get Started

Step 1: Create a Project Team.

Hospitals often have logistical and contractual ties to beverage vendors and their products. Form an internal taskforce made up of individuals from a broad range of departments.

Step 2: Develop a baseline or conduct annual assessment.

A critical first step in creating a healthy beverage program is an audit of current beverage policies, practices, access points and product selection. This will give food service the framework it needs to create a clear and comprehensive beverage program plan. Conduct a simple beverage audit to identify where and when SSBs and public drinking water are available throughout the facility. Document what types of beverages are available and how frequently they are used (or total sales per month) at each location and event. [The Healthy Beverage Baseline Audit Tool](#) can help.

Step 3: Identify at least three Target Strategies.

After the audit, choose at least three of the listed strategies. If you are just getting started with these changes, target the area that has the least impact on the budget first.

Step 5: Establish Product Specifications and Work with Vendors.

The healthy beverage program must be sustainable and flexible in order to meet the organization's changing health and environmental goals. Therefore, it is important to communicate clearly with vendors about the facility's beverage specifications by developing a written copy of the new beverage specifications and a statement of the facility's commitment to serving healthy beverages to model healthy behaviors and promote public and environmental health.

Step 6: Addressing the financials.

Reducing or eliminating SSBs can have financial implications. Facilities that have significantly reduced

SSBs have seen little or no financial loss, while those that have completely eliminated SSBs have seen larger losses. The financial impact of eliminating SSBs can be mitigated through innovative programs to encourage consumption of healthier beverages, such as instituting the sale of BPA-free reusable mugs for water refill and promotions for healthy beverage alternatives, fruit and herb-infused water, and natural smoothies.

Step 6: Communications.

It is important to maintain consistent messaging with support from senior management. The message: The hospital supports beverage choices that support good health. Some facilities have provided advance notice about the transition to healthier beverages in the hospital newsletter, education in the cafeteria, and emails from senior leadership.

Step 7: Track Progress & Celebrate Success.

It is critical to track beverage purchases and sales before, during and after implementation. Tracking beverage sales by product and overall financial impact helps to make the case to senior leadership for the program's continuation. Effective strategies include quantifying calories or grams of sugar avoided and waste diverted from landfills with reduced consumption of plastic bottles. [The Healthy Beverage Tracking Tool](#) can help. Celebrate successes with staff, visitors and the community by highlighting weekly beverage trends in the staff newsletter and emphasize the initiative's contribution to community health, obesity prevention and increasing environmental sustainability.

Step 8: Make the Program Sustainable.

An internal policy regarding the hospital's commitment to healthy beverages will help make the program sustainable. A healthy beverage policy can be a part of a larger sustainable food service or wellness policy or an independent effort.