

# Healthy Food & Beverage Environments



## 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 Food & Beverage Environments?

Hospital food service often mirrors general societal food consumption patterns. However, the health mission and large purchasing power of hospitals make them excellent models and drivers for healthier food environments and systems. There is an emerging understanding that the “health” of a food choice is a combination of the nutritional benefits it provides, and the way in which that food was produced, transported and prepared.

Goal	Details
Develop and implement a sustainable food and beverage labeling program.	Include sustainability information (reference eco-labels and foods grown locally/regionally) on menu labeling for meals served in retail and patient service.
Develop and implement a hospital or health system-wide education program.	Improved the visibility of healthy beverages and tap water choices through cafeteria signage, internal newsletters and featured events while removing advertisements for unhealthy beverages in facility including on vending machine facades.
Increase sales of healthy, sustainable foods.	Use promotion and placement for healthy and sustainable food options to increase their sales with strategies such as: pricing incentives on healthy and sustainable food options, food sampling, and other combined promotions.

## Success Story

### Harborview Medical Center, UW Medicine, Seattle, Washington

UW Medicine’s Harborview Medical Center engaged in a multi-year strategy to enhance healthy retail options available to staff, patients, customers, and the community. The retail operations increased their fresh fruit and vegetable merchandising, and prioritized local and organic produce when possible. They utilized behavioral economics strategies to encourage consumers to make healthier choices, such as removing unhealthy items from within five feet of registers, stocking healthy beverages at eye level, and placing bowls of fresh fruit around the café. To encourage healthy eating at home, Harborview Medical Center hosts a bi-weekly farm stand provided by Clean Greens Farm and Market, and offers farm stand vouchers to patients seeking nutritional counseling.

## Get Started

### Step 1: Create an internal taskforce.

Form an internal committee comprised of stakeholders from multiple departments, including Food & Nutrition, Human Resources, Marketing, and interested nurses, pharmacists, and physicians and be sure to coordinate with the Clinical Nutrition Manager and/or existing hospital Nutrition Committee

### Step 2: Develop a baseline or conduct annual assessment.

A critical first step in creating a healthy food and beverage environment is an audit of current policies, practices, access points and product selection. This will give food service the framework it needs to create a clear and comprehensive plan. Conduct a simple audit to identify potential changes throughout the facility.

### Step 3: Identify at least three target activities.

After the audit, choose at least three target activities in each of the goal areas. If you are just getting started with these changes, target the area that has the least impact on the budget first. A few examples include offering taste tests to introduce new items to customers, place healthiest items at eye level or front of displays or invite local farmers or ranchers to café to promote new local items.

### Step 4: Communicate Progress.

Provide education and the rationale for changes to staff and patients at point of sale and throughout the retail environment. In addition to effectively marketing new menu items, it is important to communicate positive changes with hospital staff. This can be done through newsletters, posters and signage, and through organized efforts at special events.



Beaumont Hospital - Royal Oak, in Michigan labels locally-grown products throughout their cafeteria on a seasonal basis.



Inova Health System in Virginia offers education and taste testing to staff and visitors about healthy, sustainable and local foods.