

Meet Smart Windsor-Essex County

How to Plan and Host Healthy Meetings, Events, and Conferences.

A publication of Go for Health Windsor-Essex in collaboration with the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit.

This guide will help you plan meetings, events, and conferences that are healthy for your participants and healthy for your organization.

It Just Makes Sense: Rationale for a Healthy Meeting Policy

What we eat and drink at meetings and other functions has a direct effect on how well we feel and how healthy we are. Food – the right food – gives us energy so we can work better, be more productive, and actually enjoy our lives more, both on the job and at home.

In addition to helping us simply feel better, eating a variety of nutritious foods can help us reach or keep a healthy body weight and can reduce our risk of developing many chronic diseases, such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and some cancers.

Providing opportunities for physical activity during meetings, events, and conferences is another smart move. Regular physical activity improves health and can reduce the risk of illness and of most major chronic diseases. Physical activity can also help us manage stress and improve work performance.

We spend the majority of our waking hours at work and for many of us, most of those hours are spent sitting.

Stand up for Standing up

Even when adults meet physical activity guidelines, sitting for long periods can harm their health. In a recent study, Patel and colleagues (2010) found that sitting for 6 or more hours a day was linked with a 20 to 40% increased risk of dying within 15 years compared to someone who sits for less than 3 hours. Too much sitting has also been linked to heart disease, obesity, and diabetes. Sitting starts to take a toll on our bodies after just few hours, lowering healthy cholesterol and nearly halting fat burning. So stand up for standing and encourage employees to move around during meetings and throughout the work day.

Healthy Food Choices

The healthiest food choices are features in *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide*

This guide features whole, natural foods that are:

Lower in saturated fats and free from partially hydrogenated oils. Everyone needs some fat, but too much fat or the wrong kinds of fat can lead to weight gain and increased risk of type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and some cancers.

Lower in sodium. Eating too much sodium (e.g., salt) can raise blood pressure, which can lead to heart disease, stroke, and kidney damage

Lower in sugar. Sugar can increase blood sugar levels, body weight, and some fats (triglycerides) found in your blood.

Higher in fibre. Eating enough fibre-rich foods can help lower blood cholesterol levels, control blood sugar levels, prevent high blood pressure, reduce constipation, and reduce the risk of certain types of cancer.

Canada's Food Guide explains that we need to eat a variety of foods from the four food groups to obtain the nutrients we need for good health. According to the guide, as adults, we should be choosing:

- 7 to 10 servings of Vegetables and Fruit per day.
- 6 to 8 servings of Grain Products per day. Ensure at least 50% are wholegrain. (e.g., bread, rice, pasta and cereals)
- 2 to 3 servings of Milk and Alternatives per day. (e.g., cheese, yogurt, kefir and fortified soy drinks)
- 2 to 3 servings of Meat and Alternatives per day. (e.g., meat, fish, poultry, eggs, beans, lentils, tofu, seeds nuts).

Everything in Moderation

Adopting this policy doesn't mean that everything you serve has to be lower in unhealthy fats, salt, sugar and higher in fibre. This policy is simply designed to make the healthier choice easier to make. You can still offer the treat of a cookie or pastry now and then. Just make sure that you offer more choices that are healthy and fewer choices that are not. Whenever you do serve less healthy choices, such as sweets, cut them in half or offer the "bite-sized" variety.

When, What, and How Much to Order

When to Order

You likely don't need to order food and drinks for every meeting you hold. Consider offering food only at longer meetings or at meetings held during what would normally be a meal-time for participants, such as:

- Between 7:30 and 9:00 a.m.
- Between 11:30 and 1:00 p.m.
- After 4:30 p.m.

At other times or for short meetings under two hours – you may want to offer drinks only. Ideally, water should be available at all meetings.

Remember to let participants know ahead of time whether or not you're serving food or drinks. This will help them plan their workday.

What to Order

When you're sure you need to order food at a meeting, serve balanced meals and snacks that feature vegetables and fruit.

Healthy eating is balanced eating. Offering foods from a variety of food groups will help participants get the nutrients they need, since each food group offers a unique set of nutrients. For example, the Milk and Alternatives and Meat and Alternatives food groups are good sources of protein, which can help keep participants feeling satisfied and alert longer when paired with the carbohydrate-rich Vegetables and Fruit and Grain Products food groups.

Healthy Eating is Balanced Eating

To balance snacks:

Offer at least 2 of the 4 food groups from Canada's Food Guide when snacks are served, including:

The Vegetables and Fruit food group

The Milk and Alternatives or Meat and Alternatives food groups

To balance meals:

Offer at least 3 of the 4 food groups from Canada's Food Guide when meals are served, including:

At least two choices from the Vegetables and Fruit food group

Why such a focus on vegetables and fruit?

Canada's Food Guide recommends that adults consume 7 to 10 servings of vegetables and fruit every day. This number of servings is more than what's recommended from any other food group and for good reason.

Vegetables and fruit are packed with nutrition; they provide plenty of fibre, vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and are low in calories. These foods can help reduce our risk of illness and help us reach and keep a healthy body weight. Vegetables and fruit are also tasty and enjoyable.

Include vegetables and fruit in snacks and meals by:

- Serving ready-to-eat fresh vegetables and fruit (serve local produce, if available,), either on their own or with a lower fat dip or yogurt.
- Using fruit in salads, kabobs, or as toppings for oatmeal.
- Adding raw, grilled, or roasted vegetables to salads, sandwiches, pasta, and soups.
- Providing a vegetable soup or salad for lunch or dinner.
- Planning a potluck salad bar for regular staff meetings.
- Supplying dried fruit, sliced vegetables, or fruit salad for snacks; fresh fruit or fruit cobblers for desserts.
- Providing 100% fruit or vegetable juices as well as water.

Did you know?

Windsor-Essex County residents consume vegetables and fruit less often than many other areas of the province. Just over one third of residents consume vegetables or fruit five or more times per day.

Statistics Canada, 2013

Promote whole grains

Promote whole grains at your meetings by ensuring at least 50% of the Grain Products served are whole grain.

Some grains— such as those used in white breads, rice, and pastas, cookies, and cakes – can make us feel tired and unable to concentrate soon after we eat them. Whole grains - such as brown rice, quinoa, whole grain breads, and pasta – do just the opposite: they provide our bodies with the long-lasting fuel we need to function properly throughout the day.

- Incorporate whole grains into snacks and meals by offering:
- Wholegrain cereals, oatmeal, breads, or small bagels for breakfast.
- Brown rice, quinoa, barley, bulgur, or wholegrain pastas for hot meals or cold salads.
- Wholegrain bread or wraps for sandwiches.
- Wholegrain small muffins (bran or oatmeal, for example) or wholegrain crackers with snacks.

Promote lean, protein-rich foods

While food from the Meat and Alternatives and Milk and Alternatives foods groups are great sources of protein and other important nutrients, some of these foods contain large amounts of fat, particularly saturated fats.

- To get the benefits from these food groups without excess amounts of unhealthy fats:
- Offer lower fat option(s) when milk or milk alternatives are served
- Offer meat alternatives more often, including lentils, beans and tofu.
- Offer lean or extra lean cuts of meat. (e.g., chicken breast, inside round roast, pork tenderloin)

- Limiting processed meats. If processed meats are served, choose leaner meats. (e.g., ham, turkey, chicken)
- Make sure all meat and alternatives are prepared with little or no added fat or salt.

Incorporate lean, protein-rich foods into meals and snacks by offering:

- Milk or fortified soy beverage to drink.
- Yogurt or lower fat cheese chunks or slices for snacks.
- Fish, chicken, turkey, ham, beef, or other lean meat for sandwiches and entrees.
- Lower fat cheese, eggs, hummus, or tofu in sandwiches or as part of meals.
- Bean or lentil soup or chili at lunch or a bean dip or hummus for snacks.
- Salads topped with beans, chickpeas, or lentils.

Promote sensible beverage choices

Many of us have heard the saying “you are what you eat”; however, few of us consider the health effects of what we drink.

Studies show that people generally don’t eat fewer calories during the day to offset the calories they consume from drinks. As such, drinking sugary, high calorie drinks can lead to weight gain, especially around your midsection. This central storage of fat has been linked to both diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

Drinks such as pop, fruit flavoured drinks, sweetened iced tea, and lemonade can contain a lot of added sugar with little nutritional benefit. Instead, provide:

- Pitchers or bottles of water (sparkling or plain)
- 100% vegetable juices (low sodium) or fruit juices
- Milk or fortified soy beverage

If you’re serving coffee and tea, provide decaffeinated or herbal options for those trying to limit or avoid caffeine. Supply milk in place of creamers, flavoured creams, and coffee whiteners.

Rethink your drink

Feeling tired? Consider a glass of water before downing another caffeinated beverage. Tiredness is a symptom of dehydration, so a drink of water may give you just the *pick-me-up* you need. Also remember that while coffee and tea can be a healthy source of fluids, drinking too much caffeine can be harmful. Health Canada recommends limiting caffeine intake to 400 mg a day, which is about 20 ounces (592 mL) coffee and a bit more if your drink tea because it contains less caffeine.

Reduce the amount of added salt, sugar, and unhealthy fats that are served

It might seem hard at first, but in fact it's very easy to reduce salt, sugar, and unhealthy fats in the food and drinks you serve at meetings, events, and conferences.

To make simple but healthy changes to what you serve:

- Request food be prepared with little or no added salt, sugar, or unhealthy fats
- Ask for sauces, condiments, and salad dressings to be served on the side
- Request lower sodium sauces, condiments, and salad dressings be offered
- Ensure all food is free from partially hydrogenated oils*
- Choose reduced sodium broth or tomato-based sauces and soups, rather than cream-based
- Ask for sandwiches to be prepared without margarine or butter
- Request healthy alternatives to traditional dessert choices (e.g., cakes, cookies, pastries, squares). Think seasonal fruit, rice or tapioca pudding, poached fruit, or fruit crisp.

For many of us, it's not what we eat but how much we eat that's the problem. Most restaurants and some catering companies today automatically supersize their portions and we've become used to thinking of these as the correct portion sizes. In fact, to be healthy, our portions should generally be much smaller.

Help your participants by:

- Limiting cakes, pastries, cookies, and squares. If these foods are served, offer bite-sized versions or slice traditional sized portions in two
- Only ordering enough food for the people scheduled to be in attendance. Use the portion guide on the next page to help you order just the right amount of food.

*Partially hydrogenated oils are a source of artificial trans fat, which has been linked to many major health conditions, including heart disease. Ask your caterer to only use fats and foods that don't have these oils. Also, avoid foods that have *partially hydrogenated oil* in the ingredients list when you are catering your own meeting.

How Much to Order

It's always tricky trying to figure out how much to order for a meeting, event, or conference. Too much, and it might go to waste; too little and some people may go hungry. Here are some basic guidelines for servings per person

Vegetables and Fruit

Snack

- ½ cup (125 mL) fresh, sliced
- ½ cup (125 mL) 100% juice

- 1 piece whole fruit
- ¼ cup (60 mL) dried fruit

Meal

- 1 cup green leafy salad
- ½ - 1 cup (125-250 mL) cooked or fresh vegetables
- ½ cup (125 mL) sliced fruit or fruit salad
- 1 cup (250 mL) vegetable soup
- 1 piece whole fruit

Grain Products

Snack

- ½ medium bagel or pita
- ½ cup (80 mL) low fat granola
- 5-10 crackers

Meal

- 1 cup (250 mL) cooked pasta
- ½-1 cup (125-250 mL) cooked rice, bulgur, quinoa
- 1 small dinner roll
- 1 tortilla or pita (12 inches)
- 1-2 slices bread
- ½ whole grain muffin

Milk and Alternatives

- ¾ cup (175mL) yogurt or kefir
- 1 ½ ounce (50 g) cheese
- 1 cup (250 mL) low fat milk or fortified soy beverage
- 1 cup (250 mL) cottage cheese

Meat and Alternatives

- ¼ cup (60 mL) shelled nuts or seeds
- ½ cup(125 mL) hummus or bean dip
- 2 tbsp (30 mL) nut butters
- 1 hard boiled egg

Meal

- 2 ½ -5 oz (75-150 g) meat, fish, poultry
- ¾ cup (175 mL) cooked beans, peas, or lentils
- 5 oz(150 g) or ¾ cup (175 mL) tofu
- 1-2 eggs
- ¼ cup (60 mL) nuts or seeds
- ½ cup (125 mL) hummus or bean dip

Sample Menus

Eating is one of life's greatest pleasures, and eating healthy foods should be just as much of a pleasure as eating not-so-healthy foods. We've assembled a series of sample menus that are healthy, tasty, and provide a variety of options to help you with planning.

Notice the sample menus include at least three of the four food groups at meals and two at snacks and feature vegetables and fruit.

Breakfast

Sample 1: Continental Breakfast

- Assorted fruit (whole or sliced) or fresh fruit salad
- Yogurt, including unsweetened yogurt
- Low fat granola or trail mix
- Whole grain muffins or bagels (small or cut in half) with a variety of spreads, such as nut butters, non-hydrogenated margarine, and local preserves
- Assorted unsweetened beverages

Sample 2: Self-Serve Oatmeal Bar

- Assorted whole fruit
- Prepared oatmeal (not instant)
- Assorted toppings: chopped nuts, seeds, dried fruit, fresh sliced fruit, milk, maple syrup
- Yogurt
- Assorted unsweetened beverages

Sample 3: Seasonal Vegetable Frittata

- Assorted fruit (whole or sliced) or fresh fruit salad
- Frittata with ricotta cheese and seasonal vegetables
- Wholegrain bread or bagels (small or cut in half)
- Assorted unsweetened beverages

Lunch or Dinner

For meetings between 11:30 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. or after 4:30 p.m.

Sample 1:

- Garden salad with dressing on the side
- Wholegrain sandwiches, pitas, wraps, or tortillas, with fillings made from:
 - sliced chicken or turkey breast or lean meat
 - salmon, tuna, or egg salad
 - vegetables and hummus
- Fruit cobbler
- Assorted unsweetened beverages

Sample 2:

- Refreshing Lentil Salad*
- Roasted Vegetable Pasta*
- Canadian Summertime Fruit Salad with Maple Yogurt dressing*
- Assorted unsweetened beverages

Sample 3:

- Roasted Cauliflower and Red Pepper Soup*
- Mediterranean Roast Beef and Veggies*
- Baked Cinnamon Pears with Oat Topping*
- Assorted unsweetened beverages

*Recipes for these tasty and nutritious dishes are posted on the [Eat Right Ontario website](#) or the [Dietitians of Canada website](#)

Snacks

For mid-morning or mid-afternoon meetings over two hours or during breaks at all-day conferences:

Sample 1:

- Skewered Fruit and cheese
- Mini whole grain muffins

Sample 2:

- Vegetable tray with yogurt or sour cream dip
- Unsalted trail mix

Sample 3:

- Whole grain pita slices or baked tortilla chips
- Vegetable tray
- Salsa and hummus or bean dip

Sample 4:

- Assorted whole fruit
- Yogurt (2% M.F. or less)
- Unsalted nuts or seeds

Samples 5:

- Milk and fortified soy beverage
- Assorted whole fruit

Samples 6:

- Whole grain crackers
- Cheese
- Vegetable tray

Keep participants hydrated by ensuring water is available during meetings

Healthy Doesn't Have to Be More Expensive

It's a common myth that healthy food is always more expensive than *junk food*. In fact, the opposite is often true. Highly processed convenience foods can often cost more than fresh foods because the food companies need to tack on the price of processing, packaging, and marketing the food.

Try the following tips to help your workplace save money while promoting nutritious, flavourful food

Say goodbye to bottles. Tap water is just as safe, if not more safe than bottled water because the quality of our tap water is closely monitored by our municipalities. Bottled water, on the other hand, is not as well regulated. So at your next meeting, supply a pitcher of tap water and cups and encourage participants to bring their own reusable beverage containers.

Be your own caterer. You probably don't need a professional caterer for smaller meetings or simple menus. Save money by picking up the items you need from your grocery store or market. Choose items that require minimal preparation to save time.

Look for local. Local vegetables and fruit are not only delicious; these gems are also quite inexpensive when they're in season. So pick up some fresh produce from a roadside stand before your next meeting or ask your caterer to feature what's local and seasonal.

Leave the wrapper behind. Don't get stuck paying for the packaging. Instead, choose bottles of condiments, jugs of beverages, and bulk wrapped foods, in place of individually portioned condiments, beverages, and snacks.

Go Vegetarian. Vegetarian meals are often less expensive than meat-based meals and can be just as satisfying and even more nutritious. Review options with your caterer and ensure the entrees include meat alternatives, such as beans, lentils, or tofu

Planning for Meetings that last more than One Day

If your meeting or conference is scheduled to last more than one day, you'll most likely be working with a caterer or a hotel chef to plan meals and snacks. Be clear **before you book** with the caterer or chef that you want to serve healthy food and drinks. If the caterer or chef doesn't want to modify set menus or change cooking methods to provide the healthy food you have asked for, find another.

Remember to stress that you don't want to serve the same foods to participants over and over again – healthy eating doesn't have to be boring!

You're the Boss

Ask your caterer or chef not to fry any foods and to prepare all foods with as little fat, salt, and sugar as possible. Also ask your caterer or chef to serve:

- Vegetables and fruit with every meal or snack.
- Wholegrain cereals, breads, pastas, and brown rice.
- Smaller portion sizes for full meals that are served.
- Mini bagels, lower fat muffins, and cookies (or cut them in half).
- Fresh fruit as a dessert option.
- Sauces, salad dressings, condiments - on the side.
- A vegetarian option at every meal.
- A fish entrée option for at least one meal.

Food Safety

Food Allergies, Food Restrictions, and other Dietary Needs

By ordering food that has little or no added salt, sugar, or unhealthy fats you'll accommodate many health-related dietary restrictions. However, some food allergies and other diet restrictions require special attention. For example, people who are allergic to peanuts can become seriously ill if they eat

peanuts or peanut products, while people with celiac disease can become very ill if their food has even trace amounts of gluten*. In addition to health concerns, some people avoid certain food products for cultural or moral reasons.

Gluten is found in wheat, rye, barley, bran, and certain kinds of oats.

In order to attempt to accommodate people with food allergies or dietary restrictions, include a section in your meeting registration form like this:

Dietary Restrictions

All food at this event will be lower in salt, sugar, and unhealthy fats. We will work with our caterer to accommodate other dietary needs. Please check the appropriate box or boxes if you have a food allergy or special dietary restriction we should know about.

- Peanut allergy
- Celiac Disease/Gluten-free diet required
- Lactose free diet required
- Other
- Other allergy
- Vegetarian Diet
- Vegan Diet

Food Restrictions

If you find out that one of your participants has a certain dietary restriction, don't make any assumptions. Talk to the person directly to make sure your instructions to the chef or caterer are clear and correct. When participants food allergies aren't known or if you're unable to fully accommodate these dietary restrictions, label food that contain common allergens, such as nuts, wheat, egg, fish, and soy.

Also, consider offering a vegetarian option at meals that include entrees made with beans, lentils or tofu. Not only will this provide vegetarians and vegans with a protein-rich meal, these entrees are generally lower in unhealthy fats, higher in fibre, and will likely be enjoyed by a large number of your participants.

Useful Definitions:

Nut -free: no nuts in any form

Dairy-free: no milk or milk products, including butter, cheese, or yogurt.

Vegetarian: no poultry, meat, or meat products. (Some vegetarians eat seafood, eggs, or dairy; some don't. You may want to clarify this with anyone who specifies a vegetarian diet.)

Vegan: no animal products, including meat, poultry, seafood, eggs, honey, gelatin, milk or other dairy products.

Gluten-free: no foods containing gluten.

...Don't make any assumptions.

Food Safety

A food-borne illness may occur when a person eats food infected with disease-causing bacteria, viruses or parasites. The most common symptoms of a food-borne illness are stomach cramps, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, headaches, or fever. These symptoms may appear within a few hours or as long as a few days after eating contaminated food. They usually last only a day or two, but the symptoms can linger as long as a week to 10 days. In severe cases of food-borne illness, the effects can be permanent.

Meat, poultry, seafood, eggs, vegetables, fruit, milk or milk products may all carry the germs responsible for food-borne illnesses. When you handle these foods, you may also transfer the germs to other foods, as well as to counters, tables, cutting boards, or utensils.

To help prevent food-borne illnesses at your meetings, events, or conferences:

- Ensure cold food is kept cold (i.e., 4°C /40°F or colder) throughout the entire serving period by nesting dishes or bottles/milk containers in bowls containing ice
- Ensure hot food is kept hot (60°C/140°F or warmer) throughout the entire serving period by using chafing dishes, slow cookers, or warming trays.
- Make sure all foodservice areas are cleaned.
- Encourage participants to wash their hands before eating.
- Ensure utensils, such as tongs and serving spoons, are provided to prevent direct hand contact with food.
- Don't leave perishable food, such as cheese plates, prepared sandwiches or cut fruit and vegetables, at room temperature for more than two hours. After two hours at room temperature, throw all perishable food away.
- [Click here to visit the Safe Food Counts health inspection reporting site](#) before choosing a caterer to review their inspection status and food safety star rating.

Go Local

To promote *greener*, more environmentally friendly meetings:

Request food that has been grown or processed locally or in Ontario

Windsor and Essex County offers an abundance of food that is grown or processed locally. In addition to top quality vegetables and fruit, our region offers a wide variety of great tasting food including eggs, meat, honey, preserves and grains. By requesting local products, you're not only supporting our

economy and being environmentally responsible; you'll also be able to offer your participants a wholesome, delicious food. Local food is fresher and has more flavour since it spends less time in storage and transportation.

[Click here to visit The We look for Local Website](#) to learn more about the foods that are grown and processed in our region. This local website also provides a seasonal availability guide, contact information for locally focused catering companies, and an event guide you can reference for company social and team building events

If you or your caterer are unable to access local foods grown or processed in Windsor-Essex County, opt for Ontario grown or processed foods, when possible.

Local food can be fresher and has more flavour since it spends less time in storage and transportation.

Environmental Responsibility

Reduce waste by recycling, choosing food and beverages that have minimal packaging and opting for reusable tableware (e.g. plates, glasses, utensils) when possible

- Place recycling containers in the room for cans, bottles and paper.
- Supply water in pitchers rather than bottles.
- Provide food, drinks, and condiments in bulk containers rather than single servings to minimize waste
- Choose reusable, plates, glasses, coffee cups, serving containers and utensils.
- Use cloth napkins, if possible

Choose sustainable seafood option(s), when seafood is served

Fish is one of nature's great health foods. Fish and shellfish, particularly those rich in omega 3 fats (e.g. wild salmon, rainbow trout, arctic char), have been linked to improved memory and prevention of many chronic diseases. In fact, Canada's Food Guide recommends eating at least two Food Guide Servings of fish each week to stay healthy. However, not all seafood is caught or farmed responsibly. *Sustainable Seafood* is a term used to identify fish and shellfish that are available in an abundant supply and are being caught or farmed in a way that has minimal impact on the environment. To learn more about sustainable seafood or to download a purchasing guide, [click here to visit the sea choice website](#)

Move Smart: Guidance for Physical Activity Breaks

Most Windsor-Essex County adults are not physically active enough to maintain or improve their health. Any meeting that lasts over an hour should have a physical activity break to keep participants fresh, engaged, and energized.

Did you know?

Overhalf of Windsor-Essex County residents over the age of twelve are inactive Statistics Canada 2013

Activities for Any Meetings

To infuse energy (and fun) into any meeting, build at least 10 minutes of physical activity for every two hours on sitting into your meeting agenda and:

- Encourage people to walk around the building (but not back to their desks!) or up and down the stairs for at least part of every break
- Play up-tempo music during breaks so people can walk in time or even dance around the room if they'd like to. Or how about a group performance of the Macarena?
- Lead your group in a brief stretch break, where everyone gently stretches the muscles most strained by long periods of sitting. Refer to the stretch break guide provided on the following pages.

Activities for Longer Meetings

For all-day or longer meetings, events and conferences:

- Schedule both short (see above) and longer, 20- or 30-minute physical activity breaks – perhaps at lunch – which might include a walk around the neighbourhood
- Consider making the dress code for your meeting “casual” to encourage people to move more.
- Hire a professional leader to provide an early morning aerobics, tai chi or yoga class for interested participants (make sure you mention it in your registration forms)
- Pick a meeting place that has on-site fitness facilities or advise participants of local gyms and fitness classes, walking routes, running or biking trails
- Offer draw prizes for participants who manage to be physically active for at least 30 minutes each day of a multi-day meeting
- Offer draw prizes for participants who manage to be physically active for at least 30 minutes

Small Changes, Big Results

Go For Health's website includes real-life stories of people who have made healthy changes to their lives. One of those people is Mary-Ann. On the website, Mary-Ann shares: “My coworkers and I have made the switch to a healthier lifestyle. We bring in low-fat and high-fibre homemade snacks to share with each other. We're also committed to our own exercise routines and have since lost a combined total of 25 pounds. I find the encouragement and motivation from my coworkers has kept me on track.” To view other inspiring stories or to share your own story, [Click here to visit the Go For Health Website](#)

The Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology recommends moderate to vigorous physical activity at least **2.5 hours a week** to achieve health benefits. This time can be broken down into sessions as short as 10 minutes, which can easily be achieved during a meeting. To maintain your strength, add exercise that targets your muscles at least two days per week. For more

information on Canada's Physical Activity Guideline. [Click here to visit the Canada's Physical Activity Guidelines website.](#)

Smoking and Alcohol Guidelines

Smoking Guidelines

Smoking continues to be a leading cause of premature death. Tobacco is responsible for 13,000 deaths per year in Ontario. Protect participants from the harmful effects of second hand smoke and support participants who are trying to quit smoking by not permitting smoking during events held at outdoor venues. All indoor meeting venues in Ontario are mandated to be smoke-free by the Smoke-free Ontario Act. (Ministry of Health Promotion, 1994)

Alcohol Guidelines

While most of us have heard about the heart health benefits of wine, the truth is even small amount of alcohol can be harmful to our health. Alcohol can impair judgement, which can lead to risky health behaviours. Chronic excessive alcohol consumption can also increase risk for cancer, liver cirrhosis, and other diseases. For these reasons, it is best to refrain from providing any alcohol at meetings, events, or conferences.

For More Information

Additional Meet Smart Windsor-Essex resources are available online. These include:

- A healthy meeting workplace policy template
- A healthy meetings checklist. Easy-to-use order sheets for meals and snacks
- An up-to-date list of Meet Smart Certified Caterers in Windsor-Essex County

Healthy Meetings Policy

[Insert organization name here] is committed to promoting and supporting healthy lifestyle habits at our meetings, events, and conferences.

We understand that the food and beverages we serve and the opportunities we provide for physical activity can positively affect the health and well-being of the people who work here and the people who participate in our meetings, events, and conferences.

Accordingly, the following policy has been adopted by [Insert organization name here].

1. Whenever meetings, events, and conferences are two hours or longer, we will include a voluntary physical activity break of at least 10 minutes for every 2 hours of sitting
2. Whenever food and beverages are served at our meetings, events, and conferences, we will:

Serve balanced meals and snacks that feature vegetables and fruit by:

- offering at least 2 of the 4 food groups from Canada's Food Guide when snacks are served, including:
 - the Vegetables and Fruit food group
 - the Milk and Alternatives and/or Meat and Alternatives food groups
- offering at least 3 of the 4 food groups from Canada's Food Guide when meals are served, including:
 - at least 2 choices from the Vegetables and Fruit food group

Promote whole grains by:

- ensuring at least 50% of the Grain Products served are whole grain

Promote lean, protein-rich foods by:

- offering lower fat option(s) when milk or milk alternatives are served (i.e., 2% M.F. or less for milk and yogurt, 20% M.F. or less for cheese)
- offering meat alternatives more often, including beans, lentils or tofu
- offering lean or extra lean cuts of meat (e.g., chicken breast, inside round roast, pork tenderloin)
- limiting processed meat. If processed meats are served, choose leaner meats (e.g., ham, turkey, or chicken)
- making sure all meat and alternatives are prepared with little or no added fat or salt

Promote sensible beverage choices by:

- serving water at meetings
- not serving sugar sweetened beverages (e.g., pop, fruit flavoured drinks, iced tea)
- providing decaffeinated or herbal options when caffeinated tea or coffee is served
- supplying lower fat milk (i.e., 2% M.F. or less) in place flavoured creams or coffee whiteners

Reduce the amount of added salt, sugar, and unhealthy fats that are served by:

- requesting food be prepared with little or no added salt, sugar, or unhealthy fats
- asking for sauces, condiments, and salad dressings to be served on the side
- requesting that lower sodium sauces, condiments, salad dressings be offered, when possible
- ensuring all food is free from added partially hydrogenated oils (sources of artificial trans fats)

- choosing reduced sodium broth or tomato-based sauces and soups, rather than cream-based
- asking for sandwiches to be prepared without margarine or butter
- limiting cakes, pastries, cookies, and squares. If these foods are served, offer bite-sized versions or slice traditional sized portions in two

Ensure all food is handled according to safe food guidelines by:

- making sure cold foods are kept cold (i.e., < 4°C or 40°F) and hot foods are kept hot (> 60°C or 140°F) throughout the entire service period
- making sure table surfaces where food will be served are cleaned
- encouraging participants to wash their hands before eating
- making sure utensils, such as tongs, are provided to prevent direct hand contact with food
- [Click here to visit the Safe Food Counts health inspection reporting](#) site before choosing a caterer to review their inspection status and food safety star rating

Ensure all meeting venues are smoke-free and that alcohol is not provided

- advising participants that smoking is not permitted during events held at outdoor venues (all indoor venues in Ontario are smoke-free)
- not providing alcohol

OPTIONAL:

Support participants dietary needs by:

- offering foods that accommodate participants food restrictions and dietary needs
- labelling foods that contain common allergens when participants allergies are not known
- (e.g., nuts, wheat, egg, fish, soy)
- offering a vegetarian option at meals, including entrees made with beans, lentils, or tofu

Make choices that are respectful of the environment by:

- requesting food that has been grown or processed locally or in Ontario
- reducing waste by recycling, choosing food and beverages that have minimal packaging, and opting for reusable tableware (e.g., plates, glasses, utensils), when possible
- offering sustainable seafood option(s), when seafood is served