

Frequently asked questions

Q. Does *A Better Choice* affect in-patient meals?

A: *A Better Choice* does not apply to in-patient, client or aged-care resident meals. Whilst adequate nutrition is essential for the optimal health of all people, in-patients often have clinical dietetic issues which differ from the general public. Nutritional recommendations for in-patients are covered by the Queensland Health Food Services Policy and Standards.

Q: What does *A Better Choice* mean for private-run food outlets, cafes or shops?

A: Following the launch of *A Better Choice* any new leases undertaken with private or commercially-run food outlets, cafes or shops in facilities owned and operated by Queensland Health will be required to comply with this strategy.

Those outlets with existing leases at the launch of the strategy are encouraged to apply the principles of *A Better Choice*. Once such leases are due for renewal these outlets will also be required to comply with this strategy. For more information regarding leased businesses that sell foods in Queensland Health refer to http://www.health.qld.gov.au/health_professionals/food/default.asp.

Q: Do fundraising activities such as chocolate or pies drives have to comply with *A Better Choice*?

A: All fundraising activities conducted within Queensland Health facilities are required to comply with this strategy. Under *A Better Choice* foods and drinks from the **RED** category are not to be used in fundraising activities including:

- raffles
- static displays including fundraising chocolates and confectionery
- fundraising BBQs, breakfasts or morning teas
- bake sales
- special interest or awareness weeks, competitions and/or give-aways.

Consider fundraising drives and products that promote health and well being to complement *A Better Choice*. These could include:

- healthier food options such as seasonal fruit drives or dried fruits
- spring flower drives
- toothbrushes
- healthy food cookbooks
- sunscreen
- garden tools
- physical activity events such as fun runs or ride-to-work day
- healthy BBQs.

For more information on fundraising refer to the *A Better Choice Tool Kit* which can be downloaded or printed on-line at

http://www.health.qld.gov.au/health_professionals/food/default.asp.

Q: How long do Queensland Health facilities have to implement *A Better Choice*?

A: An introductory phase of 12 months will allow facilities adequate time to work towards improving the nutritional value of foods and drinks supplied. ***A Better Choice* will be mandatory in all Queensland Health facilities from 1 September 2008.**

Q: Will profits decrease as a result of *A Better Choice*?

A: It is often incorrectly assumed that people will not buy healthier food and drinks from a café, shop or stall. *A Better Choice* builds on the Queensland Government's *Smart Choices – Healthy Food and Drink Supply Strategy for Queensland Schools* and other Queensland Health projects that have implemented healthy food and drink choices. Results from such initiatives indicate increased patronage, turnover and profits following the introduction of healthier choices.

Queensland Health initiatives such as the *Go for 2 and 5*[®] fruit and vegetable promotion and the *Eat Well Be Active* campaign support *A Better Choice* by encouraging all Queenslanders to adopt healthier eating habits. *A Better Choice* is consistent with a wide range of nutrition programs being implemented throughout Queensland. There is no evidence that profits will decrease.

Q: Will private hospitals be required to implement *A Better Choice*?

A: Even though implementation of the strategy is not mandatory in private hospitals, these facilities are welcome to adopt *A Better Choice* and model healthy eating practices in their settings.

Q: What support is available to help implement *A Better Choice*?

A: A number of resources are available to assist facilities to make changes to foods and drinks supplied. These include the *A Better Choice* strategy, Food and Drink guide, Nutrient Criteria to identify **RED** foods, Tool Kit, promotional materials and website. Support is also available from local District Contacts and via email abetterchoice@health.qld.gov.au.

Q: Can I use the product list developed for School tuckshops to find healthier options to comply with *A Better Choice*?

A: To assist Queensland Schools implement the *Smart Choices Healthy Food and Drink Supply Strategy for Queensland Schools*, the Queensland Association of School Tuckshops (QAST) developed a registered product list for items classified as **GREEN** or **AMBER** under this strategy.

Due to minor adjustments in the way certain foods are classified under the *A Better Choice*, the QAST product list is not an appropriate tool. For example under the schools strategy, some small packets of potato crisps are classified as an **AMBER** choice. Under *A Better Choice* all potato crisps would fit in the **RED** category.

Use the Food and Drink Guide to classify products (this is available in the printed version of the *A Better Choice* strategy on pages 27 – 39.) If, after looking at the information on these pages it is still unclear as to where a product fits, look at the Nutrition Information Panel on the label of the product. Compare this information with the correct food or drink table from the **RED** Nutrient Criteria (refer to pages 18 – 19 of the *A Better Choice* strategy).

Q: What are the healthier options? How do we promote them?

A: Foods and drinks from the **GREEN** category are the best choices. **GREEN** foods and drinks are based on the five food groups as outlined in *The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating* and *Australian Dietary Guidelines*. Included are breads, cereals, rice, pasta, noodles; vegetables; fruit; reduced-fat milk, yoghurt and cheese; lean meats, fish, poultry, eggs, nuts and legumes. Water is also an important part of the **GREEN** category.

GREEN foods and drinks should be actively promoted and encouraged at all times. Ensure these choices are displayed in prominent areas (ie. at eye-level in cabinets or shelves) and are always available to provide a greater choice of nutritious foods and drinks. Promotional tools including stickers, brochures, posters and post cards are available to help promote **GREEN** choices and can be ordered from Queensland Health Publications on 07 3234 1053.

Q: Why are RED foods and drinks being limited to 20 per cent of products displayed? What does this mean?

A: Foods and drinks from the **RED** category are not an essential part of a balanced diet and it is recommended that these foods and drinks are only consumed occasionally and in small amounts. **RED** foods and drinks have been limited to encourage increased supply and promotion of healthier options.

Limiting the availability to 20 per cent of products displayed means that of the food and drink choices offered, only a maximum of one in five options can be from the **RED** category.

For example, if a cold drinks fridge has 10 shelves, only up to two shelves can display and stock **RED** drinks. For more information on how to apply the principles of *A Better Choice* refer to the fact sheets available on-line at http://www.health.qld.gov.au/health_professionals/food/default.asp.

Q: Where do mixed foods fit into the strategy?

A: Mixed foods are those that contain a combination of **RED**, **AMBER** and/or **GREEN** ingredients, for example a chicken burger containing full fat cheese and salad. When assessed the crumbed chicken patty fits into the **RED** category, the cheese fits into the **AMBER** category, the salad and white bread bun fit into the **GREEN** category.

Mixed foods containing any ingredients that fit into the **RED** category (including ingredients that are deep-fried) are considered **RED** choices and can only make up a maximum of 20 per cent of the foods displayed. Try to make these foods healthier by substituting **RED** ingredients with better choices.

For the example above make this product a healthier option by making the patty with lean meat or buying a commercial patty that fits into the **AMBER** category, offering more salad, offering a wholemeal bun or using reduced-fat cheese.

Q: What products are considered savoury snack foods and biscuits? How do I assess these foods?

A: Savoury snack foods and biscuits include dry flavoured biscuits, flavoured rice crackers, potato crisps, corn chips and other similar products. These products need to be assessed against nutrient criteria to identify **RED** snacks.

To fit in the **AMBER** category a savoury snack food must contain equal to or less than the amount specified for all the relevant nutrients ie. energy per serve, energy per 100g, saturated fat per serve and sodium per serve. If the product exceeds the amount specified for any of these nutrients it is a **RED** option and should be limited for sale.

Examples most likely to fit in **AMBER** include some flavoured dry biscuits or crackers. For more information on applying the criteria refer to strategy's section on label reading.