

Section 4 – Developing alternatives

In Section 3 the committee assessed the current menu, collected information on current practices and identified additional areas requiring improvement. This information will be used as the committee starts developing alternatives.

This section contains:

- the planning process to work through changes
- important considerations when choosing foods for *A Better Choice* menu
- information on ways to modify recipes
- guidelines to meet the strategy's promotion requirements.

Key elements of success

- ✓ An approach to introduce healthier foods and drinks is developed that considers all factors and areas where foods or drinks are supplied.
- ✓ A new menu is planned and developed that meets the requirements of the strategy and features a variety of healthy food and drink choices that are tasty, attractive, of good quality and served at the correct temperature.
- ✓ The committee identifies and prioritises the areas for improvement.

Moving to *A Better Choice*

Moving towards *A Better Choice* will involve a series of steps including how to phase in healthier options whilst reducing **RED** choices. The committee should reflect on those key elements identified in section 3 during this process for each area where foods and drinks are provided.

Step 1 – Determine products to be phased out or reduced

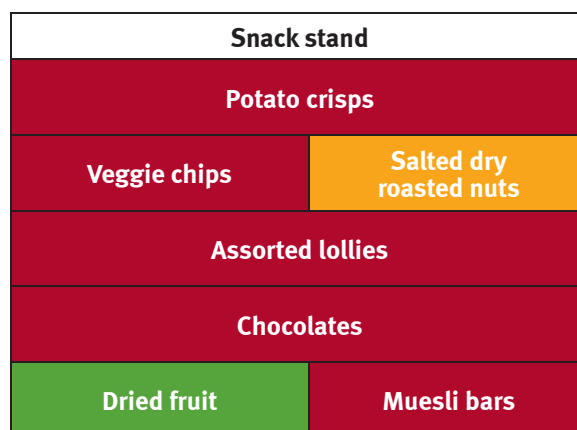


Figure 1. Diagram of kiosk snack stand

For each section within the food outlet determine what changes are required to reduce **RED** foods and drinks to a maximum of 20 per cent of choices displayed. Identify **RED** options that need to be reduced and those that will be phased out.

Prioritise those sections that contain a high proportion of **RED** items. These may require more time to introduce and trial alternatives.

Figure 1 illustrates the types of products currently displayed by the snack stand from the previous kiosk example. Currently **RED** options make up four out of five shelves which represents 80 per cent of the choices displayed.

To meet *A Better Choice*, **RED** snack foods can only make up one full shelf in this example. The **RED** items that will need to be reduced or phased out include potato crisps, veggie chips, assorted lollies, chocolates and muesli bars.

Step 2 – Identify alternative to be trialled

Determine whether commercial **GREEN** or **AMBER** options are available to replace **RED** products. Brainstorm whether comparable alternatives could be used from the existing menu by simply changing ingredients or cooking methods where possible to improve

their nutritional value (refer to recipe modification guidelines on pages 25 – 27).

During this process also consider:

- current stock levels
- time required to make changes
- capacity to develop comparable options
- investigate substitute products
- popularity of product lines
- cooking equipment available
- impact on workflow and schedules.

Try to determine a few options to trial as acceptance may vary. As **RED** choices are phased out and healthier choices brought into the menu to replace them (ie. standard pies are replaced with reduced fat alternatives of a reasonable serve size), there is no need for a ‘one for one’ replacement for all items that are phased out. This may be the opportunity to streamline the menu and tailor choices to customer preferences. Check the proportion of choices displayed. Again colour-coding items and diagrams will assist.

Snack stand	
Dried fruit	Tuna and crackers
Air-popped popcorn	Salted dry roasted nuts
Assorted sweet and savoury muffins	
Cereal bars	
Potato crisps	Assorted lollies and chocolates

Figure 2. Proposed snack stand changes

Figure 2 illustrates the proposed changes for the snack example. **RED** foods have been reduced to 20 per cent of the snack items displayed (ie. one shelf) and moved to the bottom of the stand.

The proportion of **GREEN** and **AMBER** options has been increased to 30 per cent and 50 per cent respectively. **GREEN** items have been moved to prominent shelves to promote these options.

Changes include reduced-fat cereal bars to replace the muesli bars, introducing new single serve **GREEN** choices including tuna and crackers and plain air-popped popcorn. The kiosk has also introduced a range of new savoury and sweet muffins that are prepared on site.

Step 3 – Determine timing of changes

Identify a timeframe to reduce **RED**, introduce and trial new menu items. Take into account time required to turnover current stock, order in new products and promote new options.

Step 4 – Identify promotional ideas

Identify ways to promote new options to generate interest with customers. Offer taste tests, run a competition for healthy recipes or arrange meal deals to promote healthier products.

Step 5 – Seek feedback from customers

Approach customers for informal feedback or arrange a short survey to assess satisfaction with the new menu items. Seek input into taste, presentation, and price. This will help to increase customers’ awareness of the new menu items and involve them in the planning process which will help increase the likelihood that they will support the changes.

Step 6 – Finalise choices

There are many practical factors to consider when finalising which healthier alternatives will be supplied. Consider the following:

- Don’t make the menu too extensive. Reducing options will reduce workload. Provide an appropriate number of choices to

keep the menu interesting, manageable and profitable. Offer customers a core of food items that seldom change and add variety by providing specials at certain times, or days of the week, or on the summer or winter menu.

- Change the types of foods available at morning tea and lunch to ensure there are healthy, satisfying choices on offer. For example, the current menu may contain a number of lines of confectionery, crisps and cakes available at morning tea. These could be replaced with yoghurts, fresh fruits, bread-based mini pizzas, reduced-fat high fibre fruit loaves or savoury muffins, or baked potato, sweet potato and pumpkin wedges with Cajun spices to include a tasty vegetable alternative.
- Avoid large serve sizes of foods that fit into the **AMBER** category. Order in smaller serves of commercial food products where available. Prepare smaller serve sizes of foods and drinks that are made or packaged on the premises.
- Promote healthy ‘meal deals’ on the menu. This provides value for money and encourages the concept of combining foods to create healthy meals.
- Add interesting, enticing descriptions and names for menu categories and foods on the menu.
- Price foods and drinks appropriately for the market.
- Bring new choices into the menu and promote these well. Consider to phase out **RED** foods once the new products are selling well.

In undertaking this phased approach, changes to the menu are likely to evolve rather than be designed all at once. Section 6 ‘Getting on with the job’ will provide more hints and tips on managing changes before finalising the menu.

Templates that capture the steps described in this section have been developed to help phase in alternatives and reduce **RED** options. The template can be used to record decisions about alternatives to be tried, timing, feedback, final selections for the menu and promotional ideas.

The diagram below illustrates the alternatives to introduce to the snack stand example. An electronic copy of the template has been included on the CD-ROM.



Phase in/out template

Products to phase in/out or reduce	Potato crisps, veggie chips, muesli bars, lollies and chocolates.
Alternatives	Trial new cereal bars, tuna and crackers, air-popped popcorn, assorted sweet and savoury muffins.
Timing	Introduce cereal bars, tuna and crackers and popcorn in March. Introduce sweet and savoury muffins in April.
Promotional ideas	Promote changes to snack items in March (bars, popcorn and tuna and crackers) and April (muffins) through local newsletter. First week March offer taste test of new cereal bars, second week tuna and crackers and third week the popcorn. Hold a competition for healthy muffin recipes with winning recipe to be made by the kiosk.
Feedback	Ask customers opinions on free samples and monitor amount of samples remaining to determine most popular items.
Finalise choices	Tuna and crackers, air-popped popcorn and muffins. Look for other commercial cereal bars and trial in three months.

Recipe modification

Recipes can be made healthier by making a few simple changes to cooking methods, preparation and the ingredients used. The information below will assist in making recipes both healthier and easier to prepare.

Foods and drinks prepared on site are best assessed by looking at the types of ingredients and preparation methods used. The Food and Drink Guide on page 27 – 39 of the ABC strategy will help classify foods prepared on site.

For example, if all **GREEN** ingredients are used, the meal item is considered a **GREEN** choice. If a meal contains ingredients from two categories ie. **GREEN** or **AMBER** the meal is considered an **AMBER** choice. Use the Food and Drink Guide to help identify where ingredients are likely to fit.

Successful makeovers – ingredients

Many recipes call for more fat, sugar and salt than is needed for good flavour and quality. Depending on the recipe, substitute or reduce ingredients to decrease fat, sugar and salt and add ingredients to increase the fibre content and nutritional quality of the food.

Always test the recipe when making a modification. Adjust the ingredients and method until you have a consistent result. Trial samples with customers – offer taste tests and ask for feedback.

A recipe template has been included to assist this process. The template contains an ingredients list, ingredient and packaging costs and space to note instructions. The template can be found on the CD-ROM.

When modifying recipes, ask these questions:

1. What are the ingredients of concern?

Look for ingredients that are high in fat, salt and/or sugar.

2. Why are these ingredients used?

Are high fat, salt and sugar ingredients there for appearance, flavour or texture?

3. Can the ingredient be left out?

If certain ingredients are removed how will this affect the overall appearance, flavour or texture of the dish?

4. Can the ingredient be decreased?

If an ingredient is required that has high amounts of fat, salt or sugar, can the amount used be reduced? For example use less oil, margarine, butter or cream; syrups, honey and sugars; or ingredients that are salty.

5. Can a substitute be used?

Is there a substitute for any ingredients that can improve the nutritional quality of the food?

Ideas to reduce total fat and kilojoules

- In many baked goods such as muffins and cakes, try replacing half to all of the fat with unsweetened apple puree or low-fat plain yoghurt.
- Use baking and grilling on a rack as preferred methods of cooking rather than frying.
- Replace whole milk with reduced-fat or skim milk.
- Use naturally lower-fat cheeses, such as feta, ricotta or mozzarella, or use reduced-fat varieties. Reduced-fat cheeses that contain 25g fat per 100g grams have a good taste, texture and melt well.
- Use reduced-fat evaporated milk instead of cream.
- Use natural low-fat yoghurt as a substitute for sour cream or use extra light sour cream.
- Use reduced-fat coconut-flavoured evaporated milk instead of coconut cream.

- Use clear ‘oil-free’ salad dressings, or those made with canola, olive, sunflower or soy oil.
- Use spray oils instead of pouring oils.
- Use poly – or mono-unsaturated spreads on sandwiches instead of butter.
- Trim meats of visible fat before cooking and choose cuts without marbling (ie. topside, blade, rump, gravy beef, pork fillet, trimmed lamb, remove the skin from chicken).

Ideas to reduce sugar

- In baked goods such as breads and biscuits reduce sugar by one-quarter to one-third. Extra spices such as cinnamon or nutmeg and flavourings eg. vanilla essence, can be added to compensate for reduced sweetness.
- Buy unsweetened frozen fruit or fruit canned in water or its own juice.
- Stew fruit without added sugar – dried fruit can also add extra sweetness if needed.
- Replace one-quarter of the sugar in biscuits, bars and cakes with an equal amount of skim powdered milk. This reduces kilojoules and increases the calcium, protein and some vitamins in the food.

Moving to A Better Choice – Ipswich Hospital Kiosk

“We’re astounded by the response we’ve seen since introducing healthier options. Our new range of healthy hot meals and stir-frys has by far been the most popular – we’ve sold up to 20 portions in 15 minutes!” Katie Guest, Manager.

“We’ve worked through a number of changes to create recipes that are either **GREEN** or **AMBER** choices. We’re reducing the fat content by using less fat in cooking and asking our butcher for leaner cuts of meat such as skinless chicken breast and trimmed rump.

“We’ve reduced the amount of sauces used in preparation and have found reduced-fat, reduced salt options. We’ve also bulked the recipes with vegetables which now make up to half the ingredients and are serving the meals with rice, noodles or pasta.

“By working with our customers we’ve managed to come up with a suitable range of recipes, serving size and price. All our new meals are \$6 per serve and we have started offering combination deals to promote other healthy items in the kiosk. We’ve started to price our healthier choices more competitively against less healthy options and have increased the cost of some **RED** items.

“Every morning we’re now phoning several staff members to let them know what lunch options are available. We’ve had a tremendous response from our customers. We’ve seen some of our regulars buying healthier meals instead of their usual choices.

“We’re now looking to other areas in the kiosk to support the strategy including reviewing our staff uniforms to feature **GREEN** choices. We’re also looking to use the Go for 2 and 5 materials to help promote healthy eating messages to our customers.”

Ideas to reduce sodium

- Do not add salt to fillings in sandwiches, rolls and wraps.
- Gradually reduce the amount of salt in a recipe each time it is made. Customers will adjust to a less salty flavour over time.
- Choose herbs such as coriander or parsley and spices such as paprika and cumin, which complement the food and add flavour instead of salt.
- Choose garlic and onion powder rather than garlic and onion salt.
- Do not add salt to the water when cooking pasta, noodles or rice.
- If using canned vegetables use low salt varieties.

Ideas to increase fibre

- Keep the skin on fruits and vegetables whenever possible and ensure they are washed thoroughly.
- Add extra vegetables to sandwiches, burgers, soups, salads, hot meals and in pizza toppings.
- Add fruits — dried and fresh — to muffins, cakes, pikelets and pancakes.
- Substitute wholemeal flour for half of the flour when making breads, muffins, pancakes, pikelets or other grain products.
- Use wholemeal bread for jaffles.
- Use wholemeal or wholegrain English muffins for pizza bases.
- Wholemeal pita breads, filled with salad, can be used as a variation to sandwiches.
- Brown rice makes a tasty ‘microwaved fried rice’.

Successful makeovers — cooking methods

Reviewing cooking methods is another way to make some simple changes to increase the range of healthy options available. Consider whether menu items can be:

- Steamed or blanched (in water)
- Grilled, roasted, or baked on a rack
- Stir fried or pan fried with minimal oil; or
- Cooked in a microwave.

Using baking paper on trays for oven baked items and non-stick cookware are also another way to avoid adding fat.



Recipe guidelines

The following guidelines have been developed to complement the ingredient and cooking method suggestions to help improve the nutritional value of those foods prepared on site.

These guidelines are based on the *Australian Guide to Healthy Eating* (1998). This food selection guide provides information about the amount and types of foods needed each day from the basic five food groups, and that are consistent with the *Australian Dietary Guidelines* (2003).



Source: *The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating*, copyright Commonwealth of Australia 1998, reproduced by permission of the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

Meals

- Include at least one serve of vegetables per person ie. 1 cup of salad; 1 small potato; 75g or 1/2 cup cooked vegetables, (dried) beans, peas or lentils.
- Provide at least one serve of bread and cereals per person ie. 2 slices of bread (60g) or 1 medium bread roll; 1 cup or 180g

cooked rice, pasta, or noodles per portion (use wholemeal or wholegrain options where possible).

- Use one serve of lean meat or meat alternative per person ie. 65 – 100g cooked meat, chicken; 1/2 cup lean mince; 80 – 120g cooked fish; 2 slices of roast meat; 2 small eggs; 1/2 cup cooked (dried) beans, split peas, lentils and canned beans (NB: 150g raw meat will reduce to 100g once cooked).
- Use mono – or poly-unsaturated fats and limit to 1 – 2 teaspoons per person.

For example make spaghetti bolognese using 80 – 100g lean mince meat and 1 cup of vegetables (ie. tomatoes, onion, celery, grated carrot) per person. Serve the sauce on 1 – 3 cups of pasta and offer 1 cup of salad per person.

Mid-meal and snack options

- Offer whole or sliced seasonal fruit.
- Include fresh, canned or dried fruit to baked goods or desserts where possible.
- Add 1/2 – 1 cup of vegetables to savoury options ie. savoury pancakes, breads, muffins or scones.
- Offer hot corn on the cob or sliced raw vegetables with reduced-fat dips, yoghurt or hummus.
- Use low or reduced fat dairy foods (ie. reduced fat yoghurt or dairy desserts, ricotta, reduced fat cream cheese) to replace cream, full-fat milk, cheese and cream cheese.
- Offer snacks that provide one serve of breads and cereals ie. a toasted English muffin, a plain fruit bun. For baked goods use 1/3 cup or 40g flour per person and substitute wholemeal flour for half the amount of flour used where possible.
- Limit added sugar to 1 – 2 tablespoons per person in baked goods or desserts.

Example recipes

“We’ve started to trial a healthy hot meal everyday which is selling really well. We’ve made changes to the types of ingredients used, for example changing to low-fat, low salt versions where possible and have spoken with our butcher to supply leaner cuts of meat.

Some recipes are now becoming quite popular where customers are asking us to make these dishes again and again – such as our Tuscany Chicken and Pasta,” Dian Kitteringham, Cook, Logan Hospital Auxiliary Kiosk.

Tuscany Chicken & Pasta

Serve 8 – 10

Ingredients

- 1kg skinless cooked chicken, diced
- 1 onion, diced
- 1 cup chopped capsicum
- 1 cup chopped zucchini
- 1 cup chopped celery
- 1 cup sliced mushrooms
- 415g no-added salt canned tomatoes
- 410g no-added salt tomato puree
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1 tsp crushed garlic
- 1 tsp basil
- 2 tsp reduced-salt chicken stock powder
- Canola oil spray

Method

Spray a heavy-based pan and sauté garlic, basil, onion, capsicum, zucchini, celery and mushrooms until tender. Add chicken and heat through. Add remaining ingredients and simmer until sauce thickens. Stir through cooked penne and serve.

(Source: Logan Hospital Auxiliary Kiosk, Southside Health Service District)

This recipe:

- Provides 2 serves of vegetables per portion
- Provides 1 serve of lean meat per portion
- Uses an oil spray and skinless chicken to reduce fat content
- Uses no-added salt products to reduce salt content
- Served with 1 – 1½ cups of pasta will provide 1 – 1½ serves of bread and cereals
- Provides a **GREEN** choice

Pear and Banana Muffins

Makes 24 muffins

Ingredients

- Olive or canola oil spray
- 2 cups wholemeal self-raising flour
- 2 cups white self-raising flour
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 2 eggs
- 150mL low fat natural yoghurt
- ½ cup 100% orange juice
- 1 large banana, peeled and chopped
- 1 pear, cored and diced
- ½ cup low-fat milk

This recipe:

- Uses fruit and limits added sugar to ~ 1 teaspoon per muffin
- Provides 493kJ energy, 0.2g saturated fat and 1.9g fibre per muffin
- Uses low-fat yoghurt and milk instead of oil
- Provides a ½ serve bread and cereal per muffin
- Provides an **AMBER** choice

Preheat oven to 170°C. Lightly spray muffin trays with oil. Sift flours, returning husks from the wholemeal flour to the bowl, add brown sugar. In a separate bowl mix eggs, yoghurt and juice. Combine with the flour mix and fold through fruit and milk (note: you may need less milk depending on the moisture of the fruit). Do not over-mix. Spoon into trays and bake near the top of the oven for 18 – 20 minutes. Turn out onto a wire rack to cool.

(Source: Healthy Food Fast, State of Western Australia, 2008)

Yoghurt Dip

Ingredients

- 250g reduced-fat cream cheese
- 175g reduced-fat strawberry yoghurt
- 1 – 2 strawberries, mashed
- 1 – 2 teaspoons sugar (to taste)

This recipe:

- Uses reduced-fat dairy foods to replace high-fat cream
- Includes fruit and limits the use of added sugar
- Provides an **AMBER** alternative

Method

Whisk cheese, yoghurt and fruit together until combined well. Add sugar to taste and whisk until sugar dissolved. Serve as a dip with fruit platters or as a low-fat alternative to cream with scones or cakes.

Note: If using this dip as an alternative to cream add the yoghurt gradually to the cheese and fruit until you have reached a stiff consistency. Refrigerate prior to serving.

(Source: Dept. Food Services, Logan Hospital, Southside Health Service District)

Recipe makeovers – Royal Brisbane and Women’s Hospital

Since the release of the ABC strategy, Food and Retail Services have started standardising hot meals that are prepared daily. The portion sizes of these meals have now been set at two levels, a regular and half serve. The large serve size is no longer available.

The standard portion size of a regular meal is now on average 350 – 360 grams. The meal consists of 180 – 200 grams main dish (lean meat or meat alternative with or without vegetables), 100 grams cereal or starch component and 60-80 grams of vegetables.

“We’ve changed ingredients and cooking processes to reduce the fat content and improve the nutrition profile of these meals. Each meal now provides at least one serve of vegetables per portion. We’ve managed to standardise 20 recipes and can now offer a **GREEN** or **AMBER** hot meal everyday,” Juerg Suter, Coordinator Food and Retail Services.



Figure 3. Chicken stew and steamed rice

Point-of-sale and advertising guidelines

The committee will also need to assess how **GREEN**, **AMBER** and **RED** choices are displayed, promoted and advertised. Start by using the diagrams that illustrate how items are arranged in section 3. Also note any other additional advertising or promotional aspects associated with and around the outlet ie. posters or signs, promotional stands, pictures on cabinets, fridges or vending machines.

A Better Choice specifies that **GREEN** foods and drinks are actively promoted and displayed in prominent locations for example:

- at eye-level on shelves, benches or cabinets
- at the front of bain maries or refrigerated cabinets
- beside cash registers and in high traffic areas
- are included across the menu
- are available at all times.



In certain cabinets, for instance those that have an angled front or cabinets where shelving starts at waist height, eye-level may be the bottom shelves, as shown in the picture above. Food outlets within paediatric settings may define eye-level to be that which is equivalent for a child ie. bottom shelves. The committee

should discuss this issue and determine appropriate positions for each area ie. vending machines or specific sections in a kiosk.

Use other opportunities within outlets to promote **GREEN** such as:

- highlight **GREEN** options on menu boards
- use point of sale stickers to indicate areas that contain **GREEN** choices
- feature **GREEN** choices in combination deals or specials
- display laminated posters that feature **GREEN** choices ie. *Go for 2&5®*, the *Australian Guide to Healthy Eating* or the *Australian Dietary Guidelines*.

As *A Better Choice* aims to make healthier choices easier, **AMBER** and **RED** choices must not be advertised. This includes:

- no signage or advertising featuring **AMBER** and **RED** choices on the top, front, sides or within internal shelving of cabinets, fridges and vending machines
- no promotional stands, product displays or materials ie. display boxes
- no point-of-sale promotions eg. two-for-one deals or upsizing, add chips for an extra \$1, buy two for an extra \$1
- no features in dining areas ie. advertising on tables, placemats or posters.

AMBER and **RED** foods and drinks must not be promoted. These items are not be displayed in prominent areas or locations within outlets and throughout Queensland Health facilities including:

- not at reception desks or counters in waiting areas
- not at the entrance or exit of a food outlet
- not beside cash registers
- not in lifts or on staff notice boards.

Menu boards and paper menus are permitted to list all items available including **AMBER** and **RED** options. However any graphic elements or advertising depicting **AMBER** and/or **RED** foods or drinks is not permitted. These should be reserved for **GREEN** foods and drinks.

Princess Alexandra Hospital Canteen

“We started to introduce changes by working with the Department of Nutrition and Dietetics once the strategy was released. Together we reviewed the range of cold drinks available and achieved a 30 per cent increase in the availability of **GREEN** drinks including plain and unflavoured mineral water. **GREEN** choices were moved towards eye-level at the top shelves to promote these drinks in keeping with the strategy,” Brendan Host, Supervisor.

“**AMBER** drinks such as flavoured milks, fruit juices and diet soft drinks were reduced to 45 per cent of fridge space and placed in the middle shelves ie. lower than eye-level. **RED** choices were reduced to 25 per cent of overall drinks displayed and moved towards the bottom and outer shelves.

“We undertook a brief exercise to monitor the affect of these changes on the sale of cold drinks. Overall we found that **GREEN** items sales increased by approximately 17 per cent, despite a wide range of **AMBER** and **RED** choices still being available to customers.

“We have also introduced large banners on both sides of the drinks fridge to help promote the strategy and help highlight **GREEN** drink options to customers. We are now working on further changes to reduce the volume of **RED** options to a maximum of 20 per cent of fridge space to meet the strategy recommendations.”

Check your progress

- The committee has considered all areas where foods or drinks are supplied and the associated changes for promotion, advertising and displaying of items.
- All menu planning issues have been taken into consideration in re-designing the menu.
- A decision about the introduction of alternatives for each area where foods or drinks are supplied has been made.

Making A Better Choice

Eat Everyday

Eat Sometimes

Eat Rarely

Queensland Government
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