



## Food and Nutrition at Meetings & Events - Guidelines

In its commitment to the promotion and protection of health, the Northwestern Health Unit (NWHU) has established Food and Nutrition Guidelines for use both on NWHU premises and at community sites where NWHU services are offered.

### PRINCIPLES

The following six principles can assist staff in ensuring the best refreshment options are available for NWHU staff and partners at meetings, educational sessions, events and in offices.

#### **1. Promote healthy eating.**

The NWHU will select refreshment options that incorporate the key elements of healthy eating as outlined in Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide. While emphasizing vegetables and fruit, whole grains and lower fat choices, all foods can be part of a healthy diet. Health Canada suggests that better health is promoted by guiding people towards "healthy eating", rather than "healthy foods":

Healthy eating is the sum total of all food choices made over time. It is the overall pattern of foods eaten and, not any one food, meal or even a day's meals that determines if an eating pattern is healthy.

The NWHU supports this approach and strives to provide options for healthy eating at meetings, workshops, education sessions and other events. It is essential for the NWHU to be a role model for health and to ensure that both our messages and actions support healthy eating, promote overall health and, thus, reduce the risk for chronic disease. In being a role model, the NWHU will not use food as a prize or reward.

#### **2. Practice safe food handling.**

The NWHU will adhere to safe food handling practices and to purchase refreshments from acceptable vendors. The World Health Organization (WHO) (1999) states that food borne illness affects 10% of the population in industrialized countries and possibly more in developing countries. Storing and preparing foods at inappropriate temperatures, cross contamination, and lack of proper hand washing are common causes of food borne illness.

#### **3. Recognize cultural diversity, food preferences and allergies in our community.**

The NWHU strives to select refreshment options that are culturally and physically acceptable for those attending meetings and events. The NWHU is committed to ensuring access and equity throughout our organization and the communities we serve. The inclusion of culturally diverse foods and consideration of food preferences and allergies demonstrate the differences within our communities are valued and respected.

#### **4. Be environmentally friendly.**

The NWHU aims to minimize waste from food, food packaging and disposable dishes, and recycle and compost whenever possible. In 1993, Ontario disposed of 7.14 million tonnes of solid non-hazardous waste. Any contribution to the environment made by reducing consumption, recycling, reducing energy, and emitting less air and water pollution and by using less non-renewable resources can be beneficial.

#### **5. Promote Locally/Ontario and Manitoba grown products.**

The NWHU will choose Local/Ontario and Manitoba grown and produced foods, whenever possible. This supports local and regional food and agriculture industries. Eating locally produced food offers a multitude of benefits for consumers, local economies and the environment. By supporting local farmers, consumers have access to foods that are fresher and tastier. Local communities benefit from the preservation of diverse landscapes and the economic benefits of having working farms and food producers in their regions. The NWHU supports consumption of local foods in order to decrease dependency on foreign sources of food and for the environmental benefits of reducing fossil fuel emissions during transportation.

#### **6. Be fiscally accountable.**

The money spent on food and refreshments should attempt to meet as many of the principles as possible, at the lowest cost.

We encourage you to support Eat Smart! restaurants and local farmers and food producers (who meet health inspection criteria) when possible. See the Eat Smart! restaurant listing at [www.nwhu.on.ca](http://www.nwhu.on.ca).

The NWHU is committed to support healthy eating at NWHU offices, meetings, workshops, educational sessions, and other events. The NWHU will use the six principles to guide decision-making for the selection of food and refreshments.

The Nutrition Team is available to consult with and review food purchase requests as needed.

#### **REFERENCES**

Haldimand-Norfolk Regional Health Department, policy #11-a, 1999

Health Canada (1997). *Using the Food Guide*. Minister of Public Works and Government.

Healthy Eating Guidelines, Ministry of Health, 1996

Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington Health Unit, policy #IV-270, 1999

Toronto Public Health, Healthy Eating Policy, 2003

World Health Organization (1999). *Strategies to implement HACCP in small and less developed business*. Report of a WHO Consultation. The Hague.