

# NUTRITION *at* WORK



Providing healthy meals and snacks  
for a thriving workforce

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## Navigating this Handbook

Look for these call-out boxes and symbols throughout the handbook to direct you to relevant information:



### Case Studies

Examples from businesses that are focusing on workforce nutrition



### Did You Know?

Useful information and tips on specific topics



### Find Out More...

Indicates you can find more information or resources on the handbook's website:  
[NutritionConnect.org/Nutrition-at-Work](https://NutritionConnect.org/Nutrition-at-Work)



### Cost-Effective Changes

Recommendations that can help keep costs down

# Introduction



## Benefits of Workforce Nutrition

*Workforce nutrition is a win-win for companies looking to improve both employee health and business outcomes. It is also a way to contribute to the nutrition targets of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This is important, as nutrition interventions can significantly benefit employee health.*

### ! Did You Know?

Nutrition can affect the health of businesses and the economy. One study in India found that non-communicable diseases resulted in a 200 billion USD economic loss in 2015.<sup>1</sup>

### Local Impact

Would you like to learn more about nutrition in your country? The Global Nutrition Report provides country profiles as well as global, regional and country specific information.

Visit: [globalnutritionreport.org](http://globalnutritionreport.org)

## Types of Workforce Nutrition Programmes

There are different types of workforce nutrition programmes and companies can choose which combinations best suit their needs, if a comprehensive programme is not possible or necessary. GAIN and the Scaling Up Nutrition Business Network (SBN) recognize the following categories of workforce nutrition activations with proven effectiveness:<sup>2</sup>



### Breastfeeding Support:

Providing the time and space for breastfeeding mothers to feed their infants or express breast milk is crucial for the health of both mother and child.



### Nutrition Education:

Helping people understand how to feed themselves and their families, get the right foods in the right amounts at the right prices, prepare healthy foods and meals which they enjoy, recognize poor food choices and teach others about healthy eating can all be part of nutrition education.



### Nutrition Focused Health Checks:

Offering health checks – such as measuring micronutrient levels, blood pressure, or body mass index – can form an effective foundation for workforce nutrition programmes, as they provide personalized data for each employee and a counselling or educational component.



### Physical Activity:

Including physical activity as part of a larger workforce nutrition programme can complement the health impact of other interventions, this is particularly important for sedentary workforces. Physical activity includes activities undertaken while working, playing, carrying out household chores, travelling and engaging in recreational pursuits.<sup>3</sup>



### Healthy Food at Work:

Offering healthy meals or snacks to employees during the workday is an opportunity for employers to directly improve the health and nutritional status of their workforce.

**Providing healthy food at work is the focus of this handbook.**

<sup>1</sup>Banerjee P et al. Wellness programmes in the workplace in India. The Lancet. 2018.

<sup>2</sup>GAIN. Improving Workplace Nutrition. Evidence Brief. 2018.

<sup>3</sup>SUN Business Network. Addressing Workforce Nutrition Commitments. Guidance for Global Members of the SUN Business Network (SBN). 2019.

# Purpose of This Handbook

*This handbook serves as a practical guide to providing healthy meals and snacks to employees in resource-constrained settings.*

## Who is this handbook for?

- Businesses that offer snacks or a single-meal choice to employees during the workday. This handbook provides information to help managers, chefs, cooks and caterers decide what and how much to serve
- Employers that do not currently offer food to employees but are interested in taking the first steps towards a workforce nutrition programme

**Not for** - offices or other workplaces that host a paid canteen with multiple food choices. See the handbook's Resources page on NutritionConnect.org for materials for canteens.



### Not Just for Businesses

While this handbook serves as a practical guide for businesses, it can also be used by other organisations that offer food to employees, such as non-profits, civil societies, academic or government organisations.

## What is covered?

- Guidance on how to provide healthy meals and snacks to employees
- Information on how offering healthy food to employees can benefit businesses

**Not covered** - other types of workforce nutrition programmes, such as breastfeeding support, nutrition education, nutrition focused health checks or physical activity. See the handbook's Resources page on NutritionConnect.org for other workforce nutrition programme materials.



## Why is workforce nutrition important?

- Following a nutritious diet can have a positive impact on employee health and wellbeing. Employers can improve the health of their workforce and benefit their business by offering healthy food during the workday



# Quick Start Guide

*Providing nutritious food during the workday can help employees stay healthy and provides benefits to businesses.*



## ...can a workforce nutrition programme benefit employers?

Providing nutritious food during the workday can improve employee health, productivity and retention

**Tip:** Start with a cost-effective intervention, such as providing a healthy snack or offering a paid canteen with nutritious foods

See the Business Case section (page 8) for more information



## ...can employers offer a healthy meal while staying on budget?

Changes can be made one step at a time

**Tip:** Shift towards a balanced meal by monitoring serving sizes to reduce waste and offering a variety of nutritious foods

See the Building a Healthy Meal section (page 11) for more information

## How...



## ...can employers improve the snacks they offer?

Snacks are an important aspect of a healthy diet that are often overlooked. They can help employees stay focused and maintain energy levels throughout the day

**Tip:** Switch to a healthier snack option, such as an egg, banana or fortified grain product

See the Building a Healthy Snack section (page 23) for more information



## ...can monitoring and evaluation help employers determine if a programme is successful?

Data can help employers determine what changes should be made

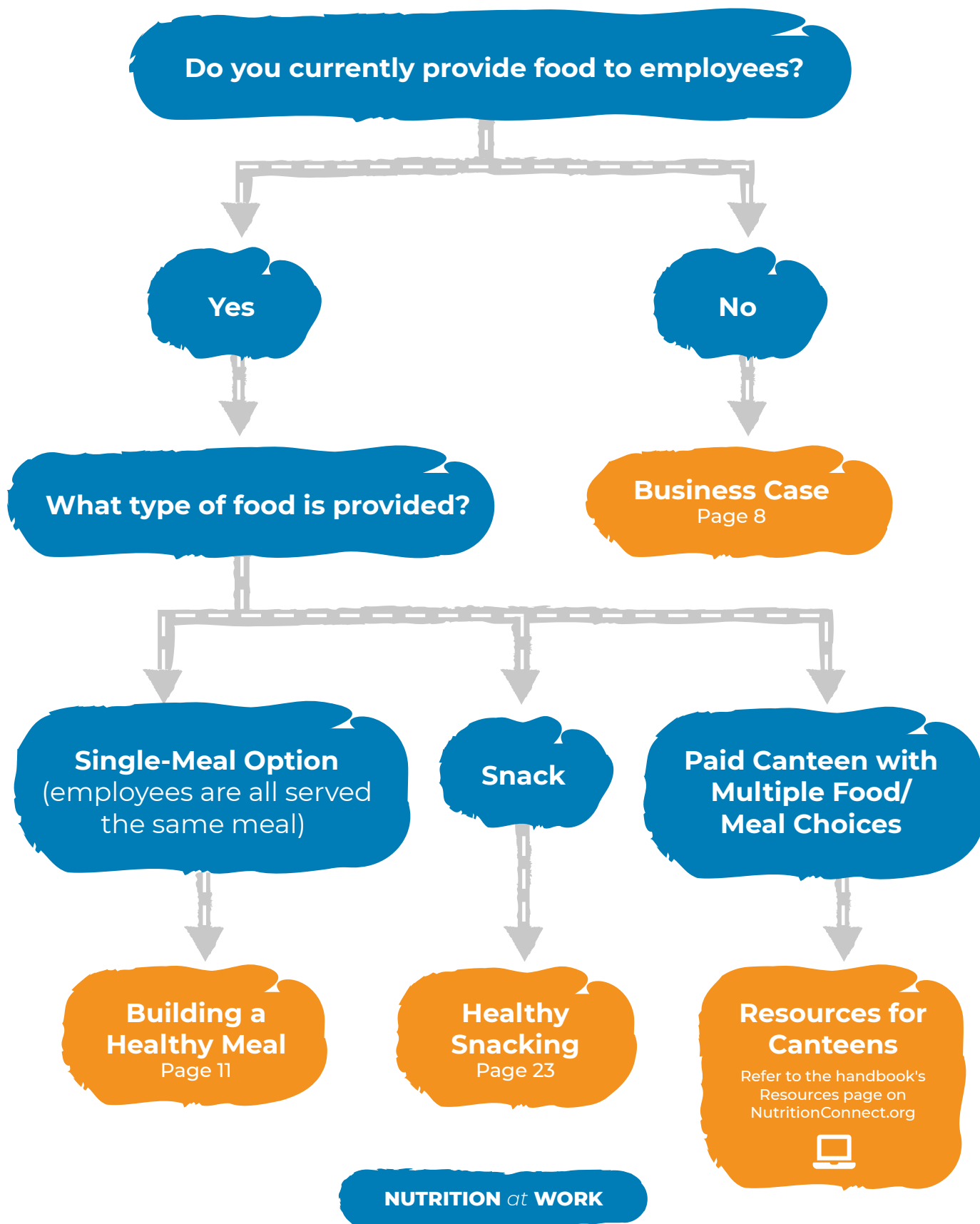
**Tip:** Consider what questions you'd like to answer and begin collecting data at the start of the programme

See the Programme Management section (page 27) for more information

# Programme Assessment

Take the first step towards healthier meals by completing this programme assessment. It will direct you to the sections and resources with relevant information for your workforce and food programme.

## Get Started



# Nutrition Basics

**What are calories (or kilocalories)?** They are units used to measure energy. Calories come from protein, carbohydrates and fats. We need energy to live, work and be active, but getting too much can lead to excess weight gain. Eating a balanced diet with the right amount of calories can help us maintain a healthy body weight.

**What are nutrients?** They are substances used by the body for growth, development and to maintain good health. Different foods provide different types of nutrients, so it is important to eat a variety of foods to stay healthy. Macronutrients, which we need in larger amounts, are carbohydrates, protein and fats. Micronutrients, which we need in smaller amounts, are vitamins and minerals.

**What are food groups?** They are types of foods grouped together because they have similar nutrients. We can use food groups to understand how much of each type of food to eat per meal.



## Know Your Workforce

Malnutrition affects employee health and productivity. However, not all populations face the same problems. Nutrition issues that impact employees can be divided into three groups: insufficient energy, micronutrient deficiencies and overweight and obesity.

Employees may be affected by one or more of these issues. There is often overlap between overnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies. For example, a person might consume too many calories but at the same time their diet does not contain all the micronutrients their body needs.



### Insufficient Energy

Do employees get enough calories/food to perform well throughout the workday?

The amount of energy we need varies from person to person. Employees that have physically demanding jobs need more food to sustain their energy levels. Additional food can also benefit employees who eat little food outside of work.



### Micronutrient Deficiencies

Are employees eating the types of foods that deliver the nutrients they need?

Micronutrients, like vitamins and minerals, are essential to our overall health and wellbeing. Eating foods that contain the right micronutrients can help employees stay healthy, especially during life stages when they have a greater need, such as pregnancy and breast feeding.



### Overweight and Obesity

Do employees eat foods with too many calories or too much sugar, salt or fat?

All employees, but especially those who are at risk for overweight, obesity and diet-related non-communicable diseases (such as diabetes, stroke and heart disease) should follow a balanced diet with limited added sugar, salt and fat.

For more basic nutrition information, see the [Glossary of Nutrition Terms on NutritionConnect.org](https://www.nutritionconnect.org/glossary).



## Find Out More...

Many countries have dietary guidelines available that address common nutrition problems. You can review these to better understand the nutritional burdens faced by employees. See the handbook's Resources page on [NutritionConnect.org](https://www.nutritionconnect.org) for more information.

A local nutritionist or dietitian can also assess employee health and plan a menu to meet their specific needs.

NUTRITION *at* WORK

SECTION 1

# THE BUSINESS CASE





# Business Case for a Healthy Workforce

All employers want the best for their employees, and a healthy workforce benefits everyone. A workforce nutrition programme can complement existing health and wellness programmes, which are often appreciated by employees as well as customers who want to ensure fair treatment of the workforce.

## How can a workforce nutrition programme help your business?



### Increasing customer value while improving employee nutrition<sup>4</sup>

**Company:** Tae Kwang Vina, Garment Company, Vietnam

**Intervention:** To meet a customer's standards, Tae Kwang Vina started offering a free lunch or dinner to employees, including rice, soup, meat and vegetables. They also offered a subsidized breakfast, to discourage employees from visiting street vendors that were a source of food-borne illness.

#### Outcomes:

- ↑ Productivity
- ↑ Morale
- ↓ Number of b-grade shoes
- ↓ Rate of sick days
- ↓ Employee turnover



### Subsidizing meals benefits employees and employers<sup>4</sup>

**Company:** San Pedro Diseños, Textile Company, Guatemala

**Intervention:** To address poor nutrition among workers, San Pedro Diseños offered subsidized meals with improved nutritional quality and made other food programme updates, including offering a snack, providing breaks and building a new dining area.

#### Outcomes:

- ↑ Productivity
- ↑ Morale
- ↓ Absenteeism
- ↓ Medical costs
- ↑ Annual earnings

<sup>4</sup> Wanjek, C. *Food at Work workplace solutions for malnutrition, obesity and chronic diseases*. 2005.

# Simple Solutions for Companies Just Getting Started

If your company does not yet have a programme in place, you may wonder how to get started. These activations can have a big impact with less investment.



1



## Separated Eating Space

Providing workers with a dedicated clean space for accessing drinking water, washing hands with soap and eating snacks or a mid-day meal can help them relax during their breaks and feel energized for the rest of the workday.

2



## Paid Canteen or Shop

Offering healthy food on site in a paid canteen or shop improves workers' access to nutritious food. This benefit has added impact if workers can purchase healthy food to take home for themselves and their families. Some companies develop long-term relationships with local street vendors who can bring in healthy snacks at break times.

3



## Healthy Snacks

Providing healthy snacks at one or two moments throughout the day helps workers maintain their energy levels and meet their nutritional needs. Refer to the Building a Healthy Snack section (page 23) in this handbook for more information.



## Better nutrition for everyone

"One exciting aspect of this work is its multiplier effect: If we train 2,000 employees in better health and nutrition, we will influence 2,000 families. If each family has 5 people, that's 10,000 people who have positively benefited. And if each of those people tell just one other person about what they learned, we've reached 20,000 people. To make people's lives better – to serve my country and the people in this way – that's exciting!"

- Major Murtaza, General Manager of Human Resources for Lenny Fashions Ltd.

Visit [Nutrition Connect](#) to read the full interview, *In Focus: Workforce nutrition in the Bangladesh garment sector, with Major Murtaza*

NUTRITION *at* WORK

SECTION 2

# BUILDING A HEALTHY MEAL



## Steps Towards a Healthy Meal

*Does serving a healthy meal within your budget seem challenging? Fortunately, you do not need to change the whole menu at once. Taking even one step towards a healthier meal can have a big impact on employee health. We recommend making the following changes, at a pace that is right for your business.*

### Add Vegetables

Most people do not eat enough vegetables. Help employees stay healthy by gradually increasing the amount and variety of vegetables offered.



1

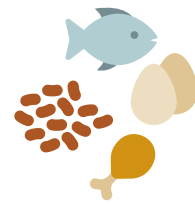
2



### Switch to Fortified Products

Some types of grains and oils are fortified, which means additional nutrients have been added during processing. These products have a huge nutritional value, especially for employees at risk of micronutrient deficiencies. Always talk to employees about why fortified products are being used before serving them on the menu.

3



### Offer a Variety of Protein Foods

Protein foods offer many essential nutrients. Varying the type of protein offered throughout the week can help employees meet their needs. Include protein foods that are less expensive, like pulses or eggs, to keep your budget on track.

4



### Shift Towards a Balanced Meal



It's easy to load our plates with too many starchy staples and not enough vegetables. Gradually shift the menu towards balanced proportions of food. Reallocating the amount of each food group on the menu is a cost-effective change that can help companies save money.



### Drinking Water

Clean and safe drinking water should be available to employees. Offer water at meal times and throughout the day. Avoid offering sugar-sweetened beverages.

# Measuring Portion Size

We need to get the right types and amounts of food to be healthy. Measuring the portion size for vegetables, starchy staples and protein foods can help.

## A Handy Technique

**Our hands can serve as a useful guide for measuring portion size.**



### Palm

Meat  
Poultry  
Fish



### Fist

Cereals  
Rice (cooked)  
Starchy  
vegetables  
Pulses (cooked)



### Two Fists

Leafy greens  
Red and orange  
vegetables  
Other vegetables

Use this system to educate employees on proper portion size and to empower them to make healthy choices at home.



### Find Out More...

Some populations may require more or less food to meet their nutrient needs. See the handbook's Healthy Meal and Snack Recommendations on [NutritionConnect.org](https://www.nutritionconnect.org) for detailed information on menu planning. Or consult a local dietitian or nutritionist to determine appropriate portion sizes for your workforce.

### ! Did You Know?



Using standardized measuring cups or scoops helps ensure that employees get the right amount of food and controls cost.



# Budget Friendly Changes

*Preparing a healthy meal with limited resources can seem like a difficult task. However, there are ways to reduce the cost of supplying and preparing a meal.*

**Use these tips to prepare and provide more cost-effective meals.** 



## Cooking Techniques

- Reduce the amount of oil that is used while preparing meals. If the food being cooked seems like it needs more liquid, add a little hot water instead of oil
- Heat pans before adding the oil to the surface. This allows the oil to heat more quickly and spread further, requiring less oil to be used
- Use whole instead of peeled vegetables. Peeling vegetables removes key nutrients found in the skin and reduces the amount of food that is available to serve



## Purchasing

- Buy non-perishable foods in bulk
- Purchase raw food items and prepare them onsite, rather than purchasing prepared or packaged foods
- Purchase frozen vegetables (or freeze fresh vegetables) if possible, to minimize food loss



## Portion Control

- Measure the amount of food that is served, both to improve employee health and manage costs
- Increase the amount of vegetables on the plate. Vegetables are typically less expensive than proteins and starchy staples and add more volume to the meal



## Reducing Food Waste

- Store non-perishable food items in sealable containers in a cool dark space. Elevate containers off the ground (on crates or boxes) to avoid pests or contamination
- Use refrigeration or freezers to prolong shelf life
- Plan how much food is needed depending on the amount of people being served and only prepare what is necessary
- Monitor the amount of food that is discarded during production and service, and take action to minimize waste



## Menu Choices

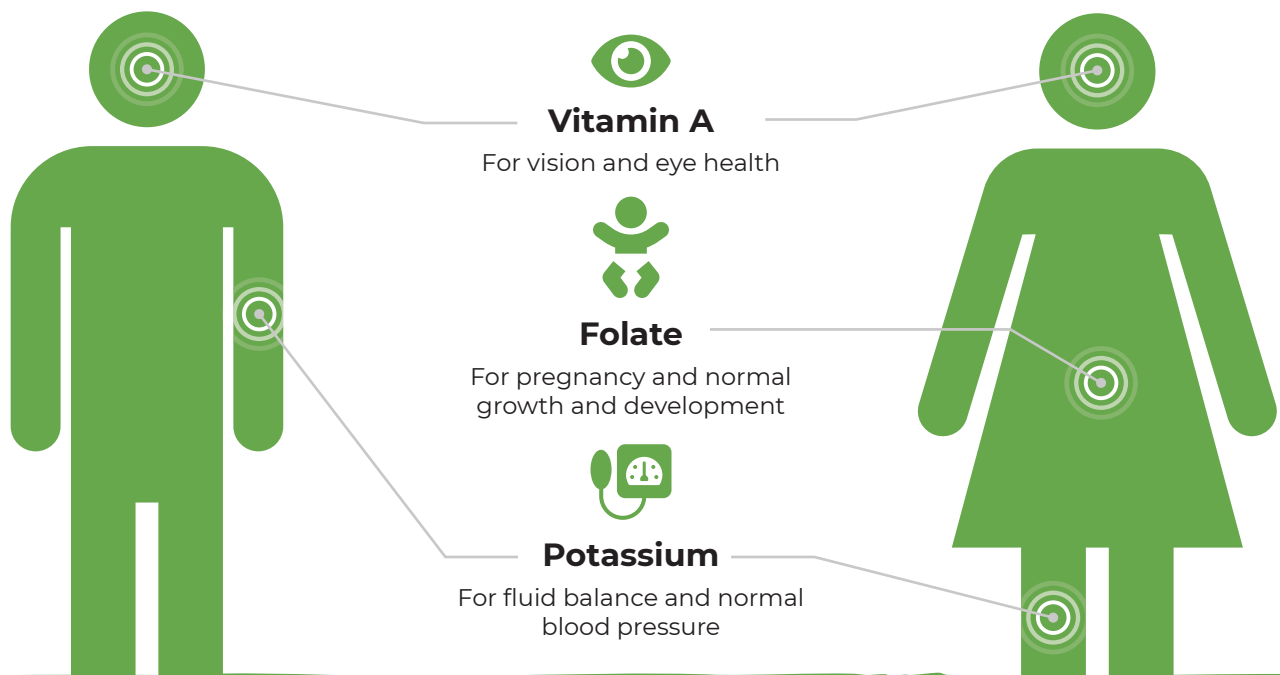
- Include fruits and vegetables that are in season
- Use leftover ingredients for the next day's meal or snack (e.g. including nuts in a recipe for a meal and using any extra the next day as a snack)

# Vegetables



Vegetables are found in a variety of shapes and colours. They are rich in vitamins and minerals that are essential for good health. However, most of us do not eat enough.

## Important Nutrients in this Food Group



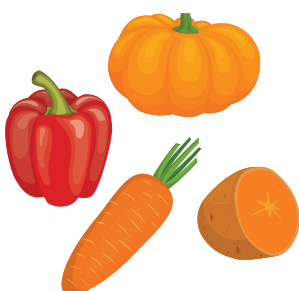
Vegetables are a key source of vitamins and minerals necessary during pregnancy, such as folate and vitamin A.

## Eat a Variety of Colours

Did you know that different coloured vegetables contain different types of nutrients? Offer a variety of vegetables to meet employees' vitamin and mineral needs.

### Red/Orange

Key nutrient: Vitamin A



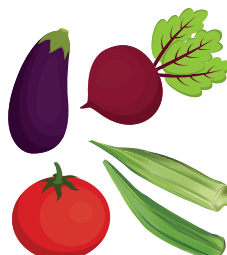
### Dark Green

Key nutrient: Folate, iron and vitamin A



### Other

Key nutrient: Potassium



### Fruit on the Menu

While vegetables are a more common item on mid-day meal menus, fruit can be a valuable addition as well. Many fruits contain similar vitamins and minerals to vegetables and are often better accepted by employees.

# Measuring Portion Size

Colourful vegetables should be eaten in plenty. Include a variety of different coloured vegetables at meal time.



**2 Fists**

or



**2 Cups  
Vegetables**

or

**1/2**

**½ The Plate**

or

**200**

**200 grams**

## Add, Reduce, Swap

Changing how we cook, prepare and select foods can have a big impact on nutrition. Follow these tips for guidance on what foods to add, reduce or swap in order to improve employee health.

### + ADD

- Eat a variety of different coloured vegetables
- Choose vegetables that are in season for the time of year
- Add vegetables to stews, soups and mixed dishes
- Add citrus, such as lemon juice, to vegetable dishes to improve absorption of minerals

### — REDUCE

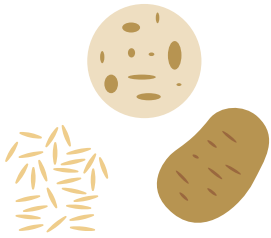
- Reduce the amount of oil and butter added to vegetables
- Steam or blanch vegetables instead of boiling to minimize nutrient loss in water
- Reduce cooking time to maintain nutrients
- Avoid deep frying vegetables

### ↻ SWAP

- Use herbs and spices instead of salt to season vegetables
- Roast vegetables instead of frying with oil
- Purchase frozen vegetables (or freeze fresh vegetables) to minimize food loss and waste
- Use unsaturated fats (like peanut or sunflower oil) when cooking vegetables

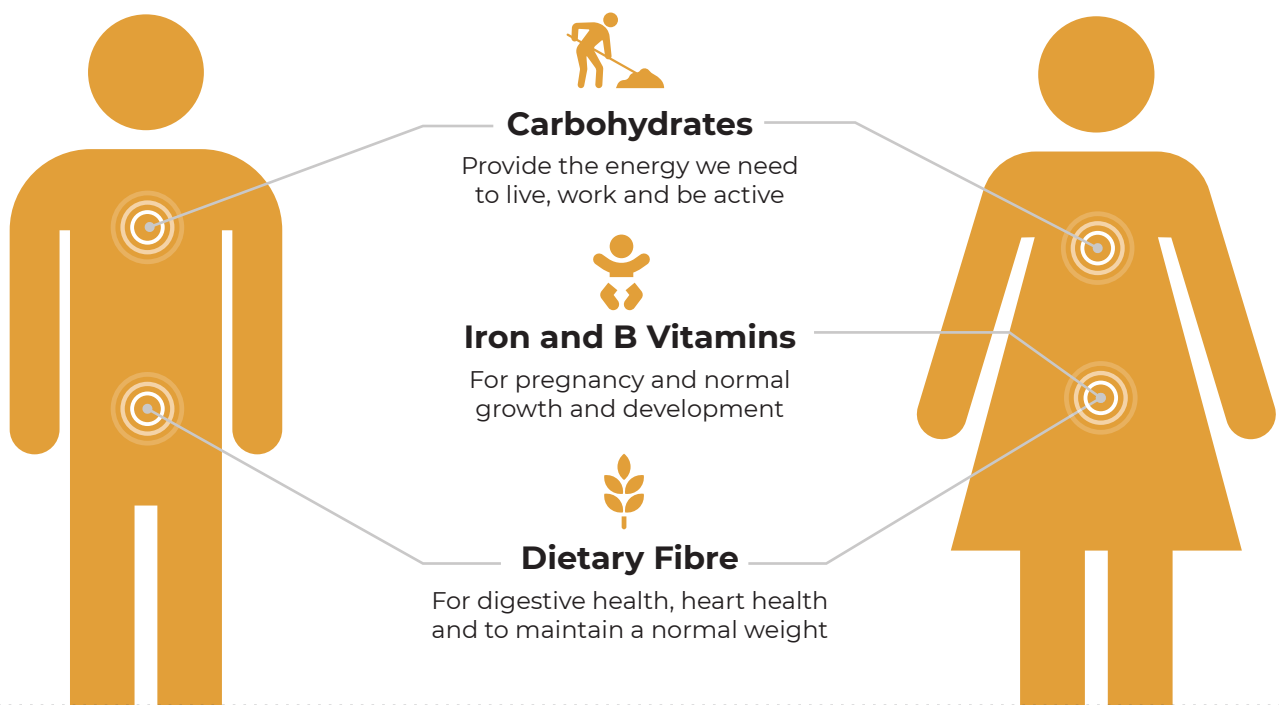


# Starchy Staples



Starchy staples are foods made from wheat, rice, maize, oats, barley or other cereals. They also include starchy vegetables. Starchy staples are one of the main energy sources in our diet.

## Important Nutrients in this Food Group



## Different Grain Types



### What is food fortification?

When a micronutrient is added to a food to improve its nutritional quality. If you plan on switching to a fortified food, it is important to communicate why the change is being made to employees. Discuss government practices and standards to explain why foods are fortified.

### Fortified

Grains that have nutrients added during processing. Fortified grains can provide valuable nutrients, like vitamin A, which is needed for proper vision and growth.

### Whole

Grains that are minimally processed. These have important nutrients like fibre, folate and iron. Examples are brown rice and whole wheat breads.

### Refined

Grains that are processed to have a finer texture. Refined, unfortified grains contain fewer nutrients than whole grains as a result of processing. Examples are white rice and white breads.

**Switching to whole or fortified grains can help employees meet their nutrient needs.**

# Measuring Portion Size

Starchy staples are an important part of our diet, but eating too much can lead to micronutrient deficiencies, overweight and even diabetes. Learning the right portion size can help.

## How much should we eat at each meal?



**Rice or Maize (cooked)**



**Fist**

1 cup, 160 grams

or



**Flat bread**

**1**

**1 piece,**  
80 grams

or



**Starchy vegetable  
(cooked)**



**Fist**

1 cup, 180 grams

## Add, Reduce, Swap

Changing how we cook, prepare and select foods can have a big impact on nutrition. Follow these tips for guidance on what foods to add, reduce or swap in order to improve employee health.

### **ADD**

- Use whole grains instead of refined grains in mixed dishes like soups, stews or porridges
- Add whole grains to the menu gradually, so employees can adjust to the change
- Keep the skin on starchy vegetables to retain fibre and nutrients

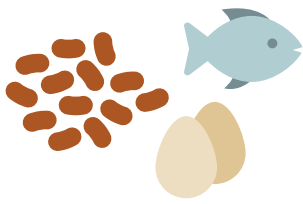
### **REDUCE**

- Only serve sugary grains like cakes and cookies once in a while
- Serve rice with little or no added oil

### **SWAP**

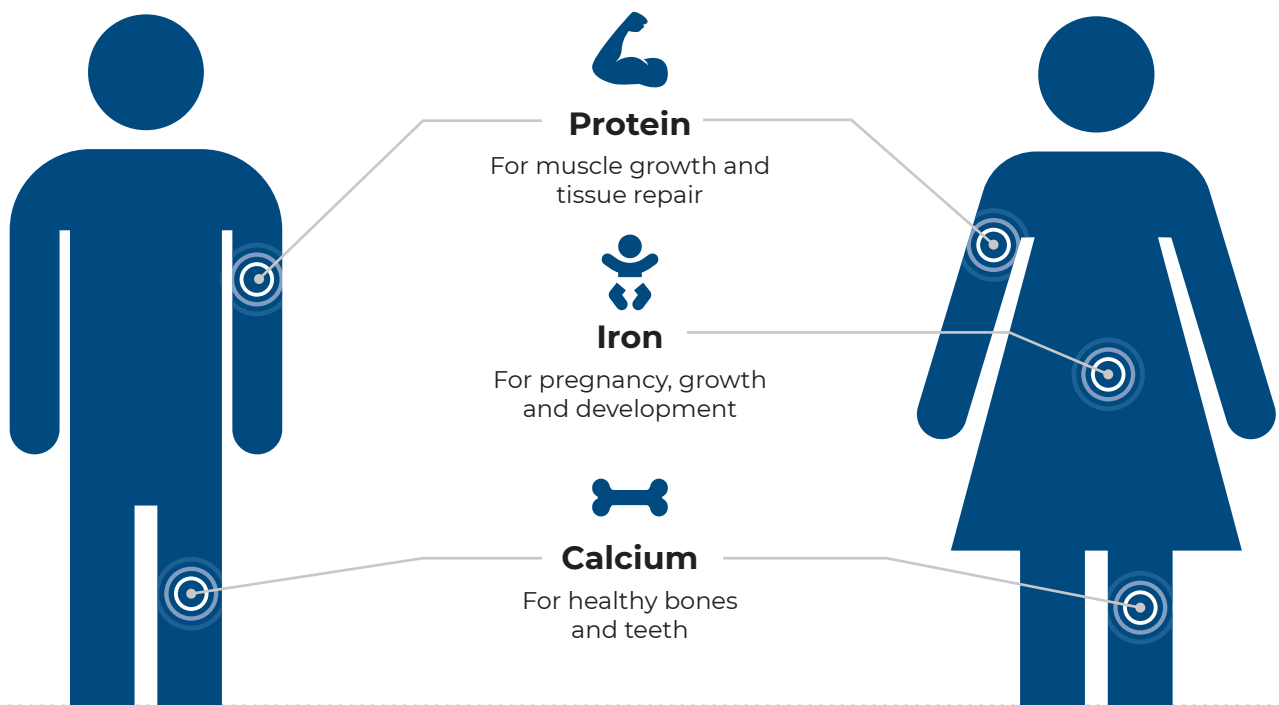
- Serve fortified rice or brown rice instead of white rice
- Switch to products made with whole grain flour instead of refined, white flour
- Switch to fortified grains when available
- Think creatively about which grains to serve, instead of white maize meal or rice, serve more nutrient-dense alternatives such as sorghum or millet

# Protein Foods



Protein foods are the building blocks of muscles and are rich in essential nutrients. Foods rich in protein include fish, pulses, poultry, meat, eggs, dairy, nuts and soy.

## Important Nutrients in this Food Group



## Beyond Protein

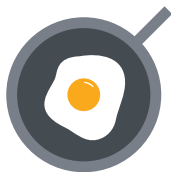
Foods in this group also are rich in vitamins, minerals and other compounds that are important for health. Different protein foods offer different nutrients, so providing a variety of protein foods throughout the week can help ensure adequate nutrition. Include low-cost protein foods, like pulses or eggs, to keep your budget on track. See below for some of the nutrients found in different types of protein foods.

### Pulses



Zinc for cellular development and fibre for digestive health

### Eggs or Poultry



Choline for brain health

### Red Meat



Iron for energy

### Fish



Vitamin D and omega-3 fats for heart and brain health

### Dairy



Calcium for healthy bones and teeth

### Nuts

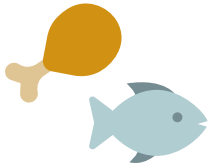


Vitamin E for immune function

# Measuring Portion Size

Focus on getting the right amount of protein. When possible, combine portion sources to increase variety (e.g. 1/2 meat and 1/2 pulses)

## How much should we eat at each meal?



**Meat / Chicken / Fish**



**Palm**

Meat: 90, Chicken: 120, Fish 120-210 grams

or



**Eggs**

**3**

**3 each**

150 grams

or



**Pulses (cooked)**



**Fist**

1 cup, 210 grams

## Vegetarian Protein Foods

Do employees at your company follow a vegetarian diet? A vegetarian diet excludes meat, poultry and sometimes other animal sources of protein. If so, it is important to offer a variety of meatless dishes and vegetarian proteins, such as beans, lentils, nuts and eggs.

## Add, Reduce, Swap

Changing how we cook, prepare and select foods can have a big impact on nutrition. Follow these tips for guidance on what foods to add, reduce or swap in order to improve employee health.

### + ADD

- Include a variety of protein sources throughout the week
- Choose lean (less fatty) sources of meat and poultry
- Offer protein foods, like eggs, as a snack
- Use unsaturated oils (like peanut or sunflower) or fortified oils for cooking

### — REDUCE

- Reduce the amount of water used in lentils and bean mixtures to include more protein per serving
- Trim the fat off of meat and remove the skin from poultry before cooking







### ↻ SWAP

- Roast, grill, boil or steam protein foods instead of frying
- Offer grilled or baked protein foods instead of breaded or battered
- Include fatty fish as a protein source on the menu
- Serve a combination of animal and plant sources of protein

# Plan Your Menu

Fill out the below table with your planned menu. Consider if there are any changes you can make to offer a healthier meal.

If you work with a caterer, share this resource with them and discuss what changes can be made to improve the nutritional quality of the menu.

	STANDARD PORTION	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	EXAMPLE
<b>Starchy Staples</b> Grains Starchy vegetables	 1 cup	Write the number of portions and the type of food served on a given workday							
	1 or 1 piece								
	 or 1 fist								
<b>Vegetables</b> Dark green Red and Orange Other	 2 cups								1/2 cup cooked (30 g dry) fortified rice and 100 g cassava
	200 or 200 grams								
	 or 2 fists								
<b>Protein Based Foods</b> Pulses Meat Eggs Fish Dairy Nuts & seeds	 1 cup								40 g chicken and 2/3 cup boiled lentils
	120 90-210 grams								
	 or 1 palm								



## Find Out More...

This guide serves as a basic approach to menu planning. See the Healthy Meal and Snack Recommendations on [NutritionConnect.org](https://www.nutritionconnect.org) for detailed guidance on how to build a healthy meal. This resource also provides population specific recommendations, to help you better meet the needs of your workforce.

Or consult a local dietitian or nutritionist to plan a menu for your workforce.

# Healthy Meal Self-Assessment

*How healthy are the meals you offer during the week? Answer the following questions and consider how you can make changes towards a healthier meal. You can also use this self-assessment tool to measure your progress over time.*

- 1 Are vegetables served each day? Have you increased the amount of vegetables served at each meal?
- 2 How often are leafy green vegetables included on the menu? How often are red or orange vegetables included on the menu?
- 3 How many different protein sources are offered throughout the week?
- 4 How often are fortified or whole grains included on the menu?
- 5 Do you measure the amount of starchy staples served at meals? How much is served?
- 6 Have you reduced the amount of salt added to dishes? Or switched to use more herbs and spices instead of salt?
- 7 Are unsaturated oils (like peanut or sunflower) or fortified oils used for cooking?
- 8 Is clean water offered as a beverage at each meal?



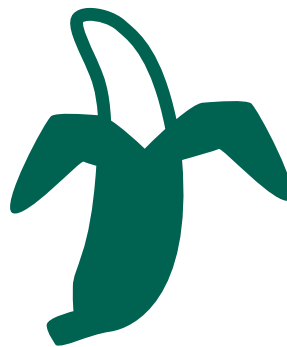
## Find Out More...

See the Healthy Meal and Snack Recommendations on [NutritionConnect.org](https://www.nutritionconnect.org) for guidance on how to gradually shift towards a healthier meal.

**NUTRITION** *at* **WORK**

**SECTION 3**

# **BUILDING A HEALTHY SNACK**



## Steps Toward a Healthy Snack

Snacks are an important aspect of a healthy diet that are often overlooked. Despite being a small amount of food, they contribute a significant proportion of energy and nutrients to our overall diet.

Providing a healthy snack during the workday can have a positive impact on employee health and productivity. Consider the following reasons to invest in a healthy snack:

- Healthy snacks provide a high concentration of nutrients that help employees stay energized
- Healthy snacks can help reduce feelings of hunger and improve concentration
- Snacks may be the only food employees eat over a long stretch of time, so it is important that they are healthy
- Unhealthy snacks contribute high amounts of calories and fat to the diet. Offering healthy snacks during the workday can help employees make better choices

1

### Make a Healthy Switch

If you serve sugary or fatty snacks, like unfortified cakes or biscuits, switch to a healthy snack.



### Drinking Water

Offer clean drinking water instead of sugar-sweetened beverages.

Coffee and tea can also be offered as beverages. However, it is important to limit the amount of sugar that is added.

2

3

### Offer a Variety of Healthy Snacks

Gradually shift your menu to offer a variety of different healthy snacks throughout the week.

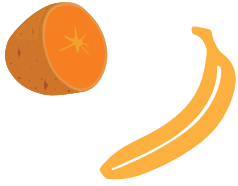


### Offer Healthy Choices

Does your company have a shop, canteen or vending machine that sells snacks? Oftentimes, unhealthy options – like unfortified cakes, biscuits, chips or sweets – are sold. Review the nutritional quality of those items and consider switching to healthier choices.



# Healthy Snack Ideas



## Fruit & Vegetables

Fruits and vegetables contain vitamins and minerals that employees need to stay healthy

- **Bananas**
- **Dried fruit**  
(choose options that have not been deep fried and have zero added sugar)
- **Orange-fleshed sweet potatoes**



## Starchy Staples

Starchy staples keep employees energized. Choose fortified or whole grain products when possible

- **Fortified or whole grain bread or biscuits**
- **Fortified porridge**



## Protein Foods

Protein based foods reduce feelings of hunger

- **Nuts**  
(non-perishable option)
- **Eggs**



## Find Out More

See the Healthy Meal and Snack Recommendations on [NutritionConnect.org](https://www.nutritionconnect.org) for detailed information on planning a healthy snack. Or consult a nutritionist or dietitian for more cost-effective and locally-available healthy snack ideas.



## Snack Time

Do your employees skip breakfast or come to work hungry? If so, offering a snack at the beginning of the workday can help reduce hunger and improve employee productivity.

If employees are asked to work overtime, it is important to offer a snack in the late hours to maintain energy levels and efficiency.

# Sourcing Healthy Snacks

Healthy snacks are often perishable items that have a shorter shelf life than unhealthy items. This can cause challenges for sourcing and storing snack items. If you face this challenge, consider the following options:

- If you serve a large number of snacks each day, negotiate an agreement with a local vendor to deliver healthy snacks
- Some companies find it helpful to form relationships with street vendors who bring in healthy snacks at break times. If this is a possibility for your business, consider working with street vendors to improve the nutritional quality of the foods that are offered
- When possible, source non-perishable healthy snacks with a longer shelf life (e.g. nuts, dried fruit).

Making changes to your snack programme can have unexpected consequences (e.g. higher costs, sourcing issues, questions from workers). Food safety guidelines also need to be considered. Quality improvement is a process that can help you identify potential problems and test solutions, before making big changes. See the Quality Improvement chapter (page 32) in this handbook for more information.

## Budget Friendly Tips

Purchasing low-cost healthy snacks can be challenging. These tips can help keep costs down:



- Purchase snacks in bulk rather than individually packaged items
- Choose local foods that are in season for the best price, as local produce is often less expensive than imported items (e.g. imported apples)
- If possible, negotiate with a vendor for a low price through a long-term purchasing agreement
- Minimize waste by testing acceptability of healthy snack options with a few workers before offering it to the full staff. See the Quality Improvement chapter (page 32) for more information

## ! Did You Know?

### Nutrient Cost Optimization

**Do you judge the value of food by the cost? If so, consider a different perspective:**

**The foods we eat provide nutrients that are necessary for life. However, some foods have more nutrients than others. Foods like cakes and biscuits have a low nutritional value per their cost. Whereas foods like eggs, fortified or whole grains, and produce are rich in nutrients compared to their cost. Serving foods that have a high nutritional value can help employees stay healthy, while avoiding unnecessary costs.**



## Offering fruit increases intake

Grupo Éxito established a programme to improve workers' access to fruit during the workday. 64% of surveyed employees reported increasing their fruit consumption with the initiative.

Díaz-García, et al. Program to improve fruit availability in a workplace and its effect on the perception of consumption by employees. 2017.

**NUTRITION** *at* **WORK**

**SECTION 4**

# **PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT**



# Steps for Getting Started

## 1 Understanding Workforce Challenges

Start your workforce nutrition programme by assessing the issues that employees and the business face. A nutritionist or registered dietitian can help you assess the nutrition issues that are prevalent among the workforce.

## 2 Developing Aims and Goals

Once you have established a clear view of the issues facing the workforce, you can develop aims to address each challenge. Creating aims will keep your programme on track and help you develop goals.

For the best results, create SMART goals, which are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound.

### Example Aims and Goals

Challenge	Aim	Example SMART Goals
Employees are frequently ill and suffer from fatigue during the workday.	Address micronutrient deficiencies among workers by improving menu quality.	Within the next four months, serve one additional type of vegetable at least three days a week and switch to fortified rice at every meal.  Within the next three months, educate employees on the benefits of vegetables and fortified foods to help improve acceptance and reduce food waste.
Productivity is low because employees do not consume breakfast before coming to work.	Alleviate employee hunger at the start of the workday.	Within the next three months, begin offering employees a healthy snack at the start of each workday, including either a banana, egg or fortified biscuit.

### ! Did You Know?



When investing in a workforce nutrition programme, the returns can be higher when certain aspects are included:

- **Leadership is engaged** and understands the importance of having healthy employees to boost productivity and morale
- **Employees are encouraged to contribute** in the process and have an opportunity to design, discuss and share ideas from the very beginning
- **Employee recommendations are considered** and activated (when possible), so they feel their contributions are appreciated and are less likely to complain

# Steps for Getting Started

## 3 Start a Nutrition Committee

A nutrition committee should be established to co-design and monitor the programme. This committee ideally includes representation of workers, caterers/cooks and managers and should be selected in consultation with the management. Some businesses find it helpful to include the nutrition committee in workforce groups that already exists, such as health or safety committees, rather than starting a new group.

Work with the committee to plan the meal programme so that everyone in the group feels free to share their opinions and insights. Look to the committee for input and support on the following:

- Aims and goals for the programme
- Employee tastes and preferences
- Challenges in designing/implementing the programme
- Communication to the staff and advocating for changes
- Sharing experiences and learnings with senior management, leadership and other companies

Once the programme has launched, continue to seek feedback from the committee and have regular check-ins on changes and updates. Quality improvement tests and processes should be implemented through this committee (see the Quality Improvement chapter on page 32).



### EXAMPLE:

#### Switching from Regular to Fortified Rice

How to engage the nutrition committee

- Seek feedback from the nutrition committee on employees' perceptions of fortified foods
- Conduct a taste test with the nutrition committee
- Have a representative from the nutrition committee announce the change at a staff meeting
- Have the nutrition committee advocate for the change by explaining the benefits of fortified rice to other employees



## Engaging employees leads to a motivated workforce

Major Murtaza, General Manager of Human Resources for Lenny Fashions Ltd., explains how engaging employees in the programme benefited workers and the company:

*"Education and knowledge-sharing brought workers together. They supported each other, giving one another advice about how to improve their overall health. Their motivation changed drastically, and – in the past year – we registered almost no complaints and no issues from workers. Even their attitude towards the management team changed with both sides co-operating for the company's success".*

Visit the GAIN website to read the full interview, Major Karim Murtaza, a Manager in a garment factory in Bangladesh

# Monitoring

Monitoring is a key success factor for any workforce nutrition programme. Collecting data and evaluating outcomes can help you quantify the programme's impact and inform future decisions. Monitoring can also alert you to coming challenges before they become problems.

Including a plan for monitoring from the start will help keep the programme on track. Once you've developed aims and goals for the programme (see page 28) consider what information is needed to determine if those goals are met.

Answer the following question to get started:

- 1 **What do you want to know?**
- 2 **How will you gather and measure data?**
- 3 **Who is responsible for the process?**
- 4 **What do successful outcomes look like?**
- 5 **What will you do with the information that is collected?**

## ! Did You Know?



Monitoring programmes work best when someone is designated to lead the process by gathering and analysing data.



### Making Changes

Establishing clear goals for the programme and monitoring its success can help you identify when changes need to be made. Quality Improvement, which is covered in the next chapter, provides a roadmap for making changes.

# Outcomes to Monitor



## Employee Metrics

- Collecting data on factors that impact business success can provide justification for the programme investment
- Measurement examples:
  - Retention
  - Health / Absenteeism
  - Efficiency / Productivity



## Healthy Menu Quality

- Tracking your menu's nutritional quality can provide valuable data on what changes have been successful. Use the Healthy Meal Self-Assessment in this handbook to monitor your progress
- Measurement examples:
  - Amount of vegetables served
  - Use of fortified foods
  - Balanced portion sizes



## Programme Cost

- Monitoring food and production costs can help you decide when menu or staffing changes are needed
- Measurement examples:
  - Food cost
  - Production cost
  - Total cost



## Waste

- Tracking food waste can provide valuable insights on how efficiently the programme is operating. Consider if employees are throwing away large portions of the meal or if excess food is being produced
- Outcome examples:
  - Plate waste
  - Production waste



## Employee Acceptance

- Providing employees the opportunity to give input on the menu can increase their acceptance of the programme
- Outcomes:
  - Acceptance
  - Participation



## Stakeholder Satisfaction

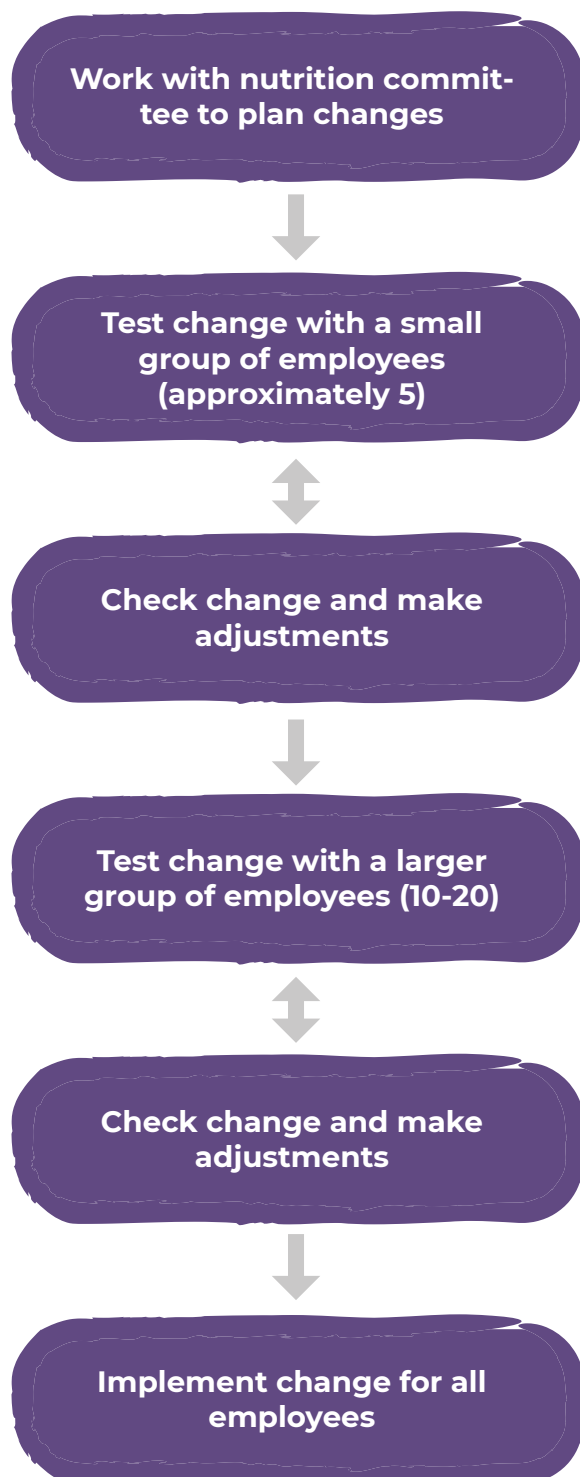
Asking for feedback from customers, regulators and other stakeholders can help build support for the programme.

## Surveying Employees and Stakeholders

Surveys are one way to gather insights on the programme from employees and stakeholders. Visit [NutritionConnect.org](https://NutritionConnect.org) for sample survey questions.

# Quality Improvement

*Some people find it challenging to change even when the change benefits them. The types of meals and snacks offered in the workplace are often driven by popularity and cost, not nutritional content. Introducing changes beneficial to health may not automatically be appreciated, particularly if favourite, less healthful foods are withdrawn. Quality Improvement can help with this.*



## How Does Quality Improvement Work?

Quality Improvement recommends that planned changes are always tested first on a very small scale and information is obtained to ensure the changes are helping achieve key aims such as providing a more nutritious snack or meal, satisfying hunger or achieving cost neutrality.

## The Process

Testing out new menus with just a few workers and reviewing success in achieving primary objectives can help build confidence or signal whether further adjustments are needed. In addition, the production processes can be evaluated to ensure smooth operation. For example, caterers could be asked about their ability to buy new ingredients locally and cook these foods using healthier techniques. Acceptability can be checked by asking workers about their views on flavour and texture.

Once modifications have been made to address any issues arising during the small pilot, the meal can be re-introduced to check that the earlier challenges have been overcome. The meal can then be tested at a larger scale to ensure that similar results can be obtained when cooked for many more people. Further adjustments may be made, if necessary, until finally the new meal is introduced to everyone.

The overall testing process can take as little as 2-3 weeks and can help ensure changes achieve the desired effect. After testing, it is easier to introduce the new meal to everyone because acceptability and cooking procedures have been worked out in advance.



# Communication

*Offering employees a nutritious meal or snack is a significant step towards improving the health of the workforce. You can help the programme succeed by communicating changes to employees and explaining why they are being made.*

*Work with your nutrition committee or representatives from the workforce to decide the best way to announce the programme and any changes to the menu.*

## Tips for Getting the Word Out

Use a variety of channels to communicate changes:

- Have management or shift leaders discuss changes with their employees
- Make announcements at staff meetings
- Distribute educational flyers on healthy eating
- Hang posters showing the importance of healthy eating. You can use government materials, if available
- Have members of the nutrition committee or representatives from the quality improvement process discuss the programme with employees
- Run promotions around the new menu
- Have employees share how the programme benefitted them or changes they are making at home

## Mitigating Challenges

Clear communication can help employees understand why changes are being made. It also helps minimize the spread of misinformation about the programme.

- Tell employees how the changes will benefit them
- Explain how and when the changes will happen
- Designate members of your nutrition committee or representatives from the quality improvement process as ambassadors for the programme
- Seek feedback from employees so they know their voices are heard (see the Quality Improvement chapter on page 32)



### Communicating on Fortified Foods

Fortified products offer large nutritional value, especially for employees at risk of micronutrient deficiencies. However, sometimes myths develop among employees around new or unfamiliar products.

Discussing the benefits of fortified foods before serving them can help alleviate concerns. Make sure employees understand why the change is being made and how it will benefit them. Referencing government endorsements of the process (recommendations, logos, promotional materials) can also provide credibility to the product.

# NUTRITION *at* WORK

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