

California WIC Branch

Healthy Meeting Guidelines



Rationale:

Improving nutrition and physical activity helps to promote the overall health and well-being of our employees. WIC Branch staff spend much of their time planning, conducting, and participating in meetings. Implementing guidelines for healthy meetings can help make our staff healthier and establish the WIC Branch as a model for our partners, including local WIC agencies.

Healthy Food at Meetings

WIC Branch meetings do not need to include food. But when food is provided, offering healthy food helps to demonstrate WIC's commitment to healthy eating, and sets a good example for WIC staff and partners. Food at meetings should include mostly healthy options that are lower in fat, sugar and calories, and emphasize fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy products, and whole grains. There are many appealing food options for meetings that are in alignment with the mission of WIC and of DHS.

Here are some examples of healthy food and beverage options for meetings:

Beverages:

- Ice water
- Bottled spring or sparkling water
- 100% fruit or vegetable juices – unsweetened
- Milk – non-fat or low-fat (1%)
- Coffee – regular and decaf
- Tea – regular and herb, hot or iced
- Coffee/tea creamers – try low-fat milk

Breakfast:

- Fresh fruit
- Dried fruit
- Yogurt – non-fat or low-fat

- Bagels – whole-grain, small or cut in half or quarters
- Muffins – whole-grain, low-fat, small or mini
- Breads and toast, fruit breads – whole grain, low-sugar, low-fat
- Granola bars – low-fat, high-fiber
- Cereals as a finger food – whole grain, low-sugar, low-fat
- Light cream cheese, fruit spreads, jam or jelly
- Beverages from “Beverages” list

Breaks and snacks:

- Fresh fruit
- Raw vegetables
- Cheese cubes or slices
- Pretzels – plain, whole grain
- Tortilla chips – baked
- Popcorn – low-fat
- Crackers, flavored rice cakes – whole grain, low-fat
- Dried fruits
- Granola bars
- Hummus with pita bread wedges
- Low-fat yogurt dip, fat-free or low-fat dressing, salsa, bean dip
- Unsalted dry roasted or natural nuts
- Healthy trail mix (made with nuts, dried fruits, whole grain cereals, etc.)
- Beverages from “Beverages” list

Lunch:

- Low-fat entrees – broiled, baked, grilled or steamed items
- Lean meats, chicken, turkey, fish and/or shellfish
- At least two vegetables, fresh or cooked, without butter or cream sauce
- Salads made with pasta, tofu, beans, and/or raw or cooked vegetables
- Fat-free or low-fat dressings on the side
- Sandwich bar with whole grain breads, low-fat meats and cheeses, and grilled vegetables
- Vegetable wraps
- Vegetarian options – always offer at least one; examples include pasta salad with beans, burrito bar with beans and cheese included, salad bar with nuts and beans included
- Breads or rolls – whole grain
- Fresh fruit
- Animal crackers, fig newtons
- Lower fat/lower calorie desserts – fresh fruit with low-fat fruit yogurt dip, angel food cake with fruit topping
- Beverages from “Beverages” list

Here are some examples of fruits and vegetables for meetings:

- Apple or banana slices with peanut butter to dip or spread
- Washed grapes cut into small bunches of 6-8
- Strawberries, cherries
- Pineapple and melon chunks
- Orange and kiwi wedges, unpeeled
- Vegetable coins (horizontally sliced cucumber, carrot, zucchini, yellow squash)
- Jicama sticks
- Tangerines
- Dried apricots, prunes, raisins, bananas, apples, etc.

General guidelines:

- Serve mostly lower-calorie and lower-fat foods
- Serve fruits and vegetables whenever possible
- Serve small portions (e.g. cut bagels in halves or quarters, etc.)
- Include a vegetarian option at all meals
- Limit high fat, high sugar, low fiber items at meetings, such as:
 - Cakes, donuts, pastries, cookies, regular muffins
 - Soda and fruit drinks (less than 100% juice)
 - Chips
 - Fried foods
 - Cream-based sauces and soups

Consider not offering food at mid-morning or mid-afternoon meetings. Food may not be necessary at these times. Consider offering only beverages. If you decide to provide food, you might offer just fruits, vegetables and/or other healthy foods from the “Breaks and snacks” list.

Adapted from:

- *“Check for Health: Workplace Environmental Assessment”* from the CA 5 a Day Worksite Program
- *“Meeting Well: A Tool for Planning Healthy Meetings and Events”* from the American Cancer Society
- *“Guidelines for Offering Healthy Foods at Meetings, Seminars and Catered Events”* from the University of Minnesota School of Public Health
- *“Key Findings from ‘Fruits and Vegetables and Physical Activity at the Worksite’”* from CA Nutrition Network and CA 5 a Day
- *“Food and Physical Activity Worksite Policies”* from the San Bernardino and Riverside Counties Health Collaborative

Physical Activity at Meetings

It's important to include physical activity breaks during meetings, especially those lasting longer than an hour. This can help staff stay attentive and involved, and it can demonstrate how easy it is to be more active on a regular basis. By having physical activity breaks, WIC is setting a good example for our staff and our partners. Here are some suggestions:

- Use icebreakers that encourage people to move around.
- Include activity or stretch breaks in meeting agendas. Plan sufficient time for activity breaks. See "Tips for Leading a Physical Activity Break".
- Consider including physical activity as part of the meeting agenda by having "walk and talk" sessions. Encourage participants to go for short walks (in teams of 2 or 3 people) while they discuss agenda items. Not only do they get a much needed activity break, but a change of scenery can encourage more creative brainstorming.
- Make physical activity easy. Providing time for physical activity during breaks, meetings, and at lunchtime is a huge endorsement and incentive. Support physical activity by encouraging "walking meetings", setting dress codes that allow for comfortable clothing and shoes, and making space available.
- If participants agree, short office meetings can be held standing up, and one-on-one meetings can take place while walking around the block.
- Encourage meeting attendees to use the stairs when possible.
- For a multiple day meeting, consider:
 - listing nearby activity opportunities in the meeting information;
 - giving participants maps of nearby attractions and walking trails;
 - encouraging attendees to walk to restaurants or cafes;
 - helping to organize walking or jogging groups;
 - encouraging attendees to get physical activity by using hotel workout rooms and/or walking in safe, well-lit locations, before and after the meeting.

Adapted from:

- *"Meeting Well"* from the American Cancer Society
- *"Check for Health: Workplace Environmental Assessment"* from the CA 5 a Day Worksite Program
- *"Workplace Nutrition and Physical Activity Issue Brief"* from the CA Nutrition Network and CA 5 a Day Campaign
- *"Fruits and Vegetables and Physical Activity at the Worksite: Business Leaders and Working Women Speak Out on Access and Environment"* from the CA 5 a Day Worksite Program

Tips for Leading a Physical Activity Break

Physical activity breaks are a great opportunity for staff and partners to get part of their recommended daily 30 to 60 minutes of moderate physical activity. You don't have to be an aerobics instructor or even very physically fit to lead a physical activity break. The key is to remember to have fun and be safe.

A physical activity break should:

- Be completely voluntary – no one is required to participate.
- Allow each person to move at her/his own pace, in a way that is comfortable and causes no pain.
- Keep people moving for 5 to 10 minutes and get their hearts pumping.
- Be fun!
- Energize everyone for the rest of the meeting.

A physical activity break DOES NOT need to:

- Cause people to sweat.
- Cause pain.
- Be a professionally-organized session.

Here are some physical activity tips:

- You can take physical activity breaks in your meeting room, but make sure to have enough room so that no one falls over a chair, bumps a knee or kicks someone else.
- You can also take physical activity breaks outside your meeting room or outside the building.
- Include stretching exercises, low impact cardiovascular activities (e.g. aerobics, salsa dance steps, etc.), and/or strength training activities (e.g. elastic band routines). Just put on some music and demonstrate some simple activities.
- Stretch your body slowly and gradually. Don't bounce. Stop if it hurts.
- Move your arms, hands, legs, feet, and head in circles.
- March in place, raising your knees as far as comfortable.
- Walk around the room or outside.
- Smile, laugh and have fun!

Adapted from:

- *"Tips for Leading a Physical Activity Break"* from the San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency
- *"Meeting Well"* from the American Cancer Society