

Making the change to healthier eating: hospitals

Introducing a healthy food and beverage policy at Alfred Health



AlfredHealth



Alfred Health introduced a healthy food and beverage policy in 2012, at three hospitals in south east Melbourne. They made changes in retail food outlets, vending machines and catering, to provide a greater range of healthy food and drink options using the red, amber and green system of classification.

Alfred Health's largest retail food outlet was the focus of research to establish success of the policy and impact of introducing healthier food and beverage options. This included reducing the proportion of 'red' food and drinks, and increasing the 'green'. Staff involved in the process from the retail outlet and Alfred Health were interviewed to establish challenges, successful strategies and recommendations for other organisations.

Results of introducing a healthy food and beverage policy at Alfred Health



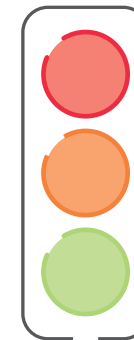
Alfred Health achieved its goal of providing healthier food and beverage options through its Healthy Choices Policy.






Retailers reported gaining satisfaction from being able to provide healthy food with no impact to the bottom line.



Profits remained steady because increased product costs were offset by increased sales volume.



Alfred Health implemented the Victorian Government's *Healthy choices: food and drink classification guide*¹, which uses a traffic light system to classify foods and drinks.

-  **Red:** Limit intake
-  **Amber:** Choose carefully
-  **Green:** Best choice

Alfred Health strategies

Multiple short trials were conducted and implemented long term, if successful. Strategies to increase healthy options included:



Increasing range of salads, sushi and yoghurt



Minimising fried food



Moving 'red' drinks out of sight



Pricing healthy foods lower than unhealthy foods

“

Business, I would say, has improved. Which is quite a shock... I'm rapt, it's good.” Head Chef

Challenges

- Initial scepticism that customers would change their behaviour in response to the policy.
- Fear the changes would drive customers away and result in financial loss.
- Concern extra time and effort required to source new ingredients, train staff and persuade customers.
- Need for the advice of dietitians to assess the menu.

These challenges were overcome with a number of strategies, outlined in the recommendations below.

“

We did lots of two-week blocks in the end, six months' worth... those results were... positive. It's made our retail partner very prepared to do other things.”

Health Promotion Manager

Recommendations for organisations introducing healthy eating policies



Ensure clear, consistent messaging about the need for healthy choices.



Provide sufficient resources and advice to stakeholders.



Build and maintain relationships between stakeholders.



Use small, reversible short-term trials.



Plan a step-wise approach with reflection and feedback.



Make use of buying power to re-negotiate contracts.



Identify internal and external recognition opportunities to inspire and reward stakeholders.



Employ experts, such as a dietitian to help retailers identify 'red', 'amber' and 'green' products.



Share strategies, such as a recipe book of healthy options popular with customers.

The Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 requires all public organisations in Victoria to facilitate an environment and culture where healthy choices are easy choices for all Victorians.

For more information about Alfred Health's trials and other organisations' work to implement Healthier Choices, visit: www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/easychoice

For information and support with implementing Healthy Choices in your organisation, visit: www.heas.health.vic.gov.au

¹ Department of Health and Human Services 2015, *Healthy choices: food and drink classification guide*, State Government of Victoria, Melbourne.



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