

Making the change to healthier eating: recreation centres

Introducing a healthy food and beverage policy at YMCA Victoria

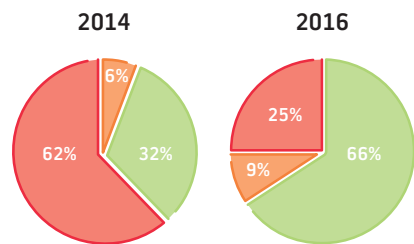


In 2014, YMCA Victoria introduced a healthy food and beverage policy to be implemented over three years, in kiosks, cafes and catering services attached to 70 aquatic and recreation centres.

As part of this policy, YMCA initiated a 'Soft Drink Free Summer' campaign, which aimed to phase out regular soft drinks by December 2015.

'Soft Drink Free Summer' campaign results

Nine of the 70 centres were examined to assess the impact of the 'Soft Drink Free Summer' campaign. Key results were:



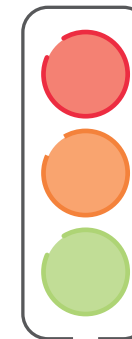
Healthier fridge displays – the availability of 'red' drinks dropped from 62% of fridge space to just 25%.



A large reduction in 'red' drink choices – equivalent to 2000 fewer cans of soft drink sold per month.



No change in drink sales overall (despite clear decrease in 'red' drink sales).



YMCA Victoria's policy is based on the Victorian Government's *Healthy choices: food and drink classification guide*², which uses a traffic light system to classify foods and drinks.

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

Top sellers after the 'Soft Drink Free Summer' campaign

Top-selling 'green' and 'amber' drinks, after the 'Soft Drink Free Summer' campaign, were:



Bottled water



Reduced-fat milk varieties



Bottled sparkling water



Diet soft drink



Flavoured sparkling water

Communication



YMCA have been proactive in communicating the successes and challenges associated with implementing their policy through media, invited talks and conferences. This has encouraged other recreation centres, councils and health services to follow suit.

Recommendations for organisations introducing healthy eating policies



Use promotional material to raise awareness of the sugar content of drinks and rationale for the campaign.



Offer face-to-face health promotion support and advice.



Ensure top down, central support, which is critical to the success of the policy.



Implement changes gradually – make small changes for the biggest impact first.



Engage suppliers to source healthier alternatives and gain their support of the policy.



Provide resources to support change, such as toolkits, approved suppliers and product lists, and planograms for recommended fridge layouts.

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 YMCA Victoria'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.