

Healthy food and drink
choices in community sport:

Building on success



Sports can help make healthy changes

- Three in four people want access to healthier food and drinks in Victorian sporting venues.¹
- Unhealthy food and drinks are heavily promoted and readily available – including where we play and watch sport.
- Sports can lead by example to promote healthy lifestyles and provide the healthier food and drinks people want to buy.
- Making small changes in your sports venue or club can influence healthier lifestyles without jeopardising your profits.

Making the healthy choice the easy choice in sporting environments

VicHealth aims to encourage more Victorians to participate in sport, to enjoy the physical, mental, social and other benefits that sport can offer. An important part of this is to ensure healthier food and drink choices are provided in sporting environments.

Sporting organisations are in the ideal position to lead by example in promoting healthier lifestyles and supporting the connection between sport and healthy food and drink choices to their players, volunteers, spectators and patrons.

From 2015 to 2017, VicHealth supported a range of local governments, sports clubs, associations and sport and recreation facilities to make healthy food and/or drink choices the easy choice within their sports venues. This report summarises some of the evaluation results from three of these programs:²

1. VicHealth's Regional Sport Program partnered with the nine Regional Sports Assemblies (RSAs) to support 84 regional Victorian sporting clubs, leagues and facilities, such as [Gippsland Regional Sports Complex](#), to strengthen policies and practices making water the beverage of choice.
2. VicHealth's State Sport Program partnered with five State Sporting Associations (SSAs), including [Basketball Victoria](#) and [AFL Victoria](#), to strengthen policies and practices encouraging healthy food and drink choices through sport.
3. VicHealth's Water Initiative partnered with six State Sporting Associations and four local governments, including [Shepparton City Council](#), to support implementation of simple changes in sporting venue canteens and retail outlets to increase the supply, access and promotion of water as the drink of choice within sporting venues.

Why should your organisation offer healthier choices?

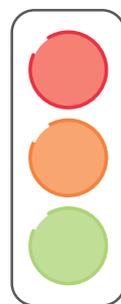
By offering healthy food and drink choices in places where sport is enjoyed, sport organisations can create an environment that supports the health and wellbeing of their communities. Not only is this good for everyone, but we know this is what people want, with three in four people wanting access to healthier food and drink options in Victorian sporting venues¹.

In addition, VicHealth programs' evaluation results indicate that making changes in sport settings, such as decreasing the availability of sugary drinks and promoting the sale of water and healthier drinks, can shift consumption to healthier options without jeopardising profits.

Government guidelines on Healthy Choices

The Victorian Government has developed *Healthy Choices*, a set of policy guidelines to improve the supply and promotion of healthier foods and drinks in hospitals and health services, workplaces, sport and recreation centres, and parks.

The guidelines are supported by a traffic light system for classifying foods and drinks into:



- **Green** – best choice (e.g. water)
- **Amber** – choose carefully (e.g. diet beverages)
- **Red** – limit or avoid (e.g. sports drinks and soft drinks).

For more information, download *Healthy choices: food and drink guidelines*:
<http://heas.health.vic.gov.au/healthy-choices/guidelines>

1. The [2016 Community Attitudes Survey](#) undertaken by VicHealth showed that 75 per cent agreed healthier options should be easier to access and promoted more than unhealthy options within Victorian community sporting clubs, sports and recreation facilities, and sport stadiums.

2. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Australia's health*, Australia's health series no. 15, 2016, Cat. no. AUS 199, AIHW, 2016.

What we trialled?

Introducing changes that make the healthier choice the easier choice in sport settings can start with a small change such as introducing a nudge to influence what people are choosing to purchase or consume. What's a nudge you might ask?

A 'nudge' is a small change that alters people's behaviour without forbidding any options. For example, displaying water for sale at eye level within a canteen and limiting the promotion of sugar sweetened beverages (SSBs) or sugary drinks by putting them out of sight, such as under a counter, is a nudge, whereas banning SSBs from a canteen or a venue completely is not considered a nudge.

During 2016 and 2017, over 80 nudge trials were carried out by sports organisations across the three VicHealth programs, which were evaluated by La Trobe University's Centre for Sport and Social Impact.

These nudges are a significant first step towards implementing the broader Victorian Government's *Healthy Choices* policy guidelines (see above).

Canteen nudges

Canteen nudges trialed to promote water as the drink of choice included:

- **Red drinks off display** – red drinks hidden behind fridge decals or posters on one side of a double fridge or put in the lower half of a single fridge with no promotion of red drinks, e.g. on menu boards
- **Limit red drinks** – less than 20 per cent of the fridge is stocked with red drinks, while green drinks are displayed at eye level
- **Meal deal** – promotional offer of water combined with a healthy food choice at a reduced price
- **Water the cheapest option** – drinks are graded to make water the cheapest and sugary (red) drinks the most expensive, which is indicated with a visible list of prices.

Educational nudges

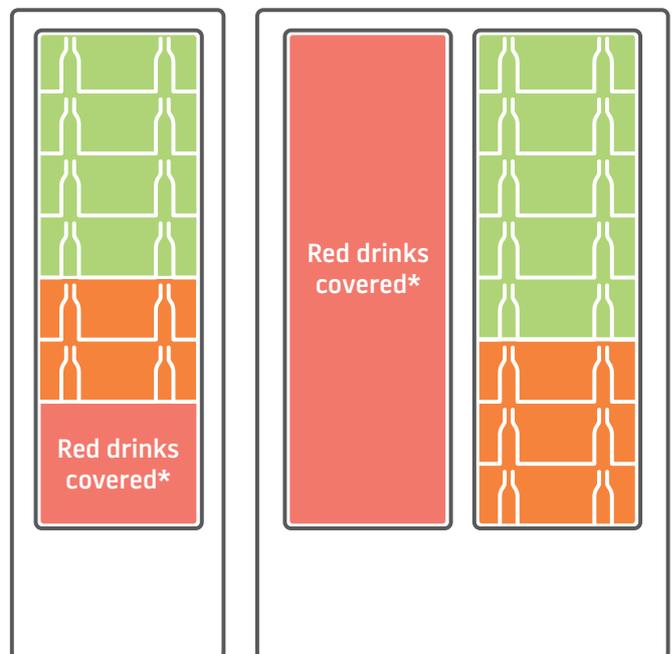
Educational strategies that aligned with the aims of improving hydration and nutrition practices were adopted by some SSAs under the State Sport Program, in different ways. Examples of these nudges included:

- nutrition education provided in coach training
- healthier snack provision and nutrition education in junior programs
- healthy canteen 'pop-up' display at a sport facility manager's conference.

What we learned

Successful nudges

'Red drinks off display' was found to be the most successful nudge in terms of changing purchase behaviour (from sugary drinks to water) and was also the easiest to implement. This nudge was found to work best when there is a double fridge, with water on one side of the fridge and the other side of the fridge having a decal or poster on the fridge door to cover red drinks. For single fridges, red drinks should be placed down on the bottom of the fridge and covered, however it works best if the drinks are in a different out-of-sight location, such as under a counter to avoid customers seeing red drinks when the fridge door is opened.

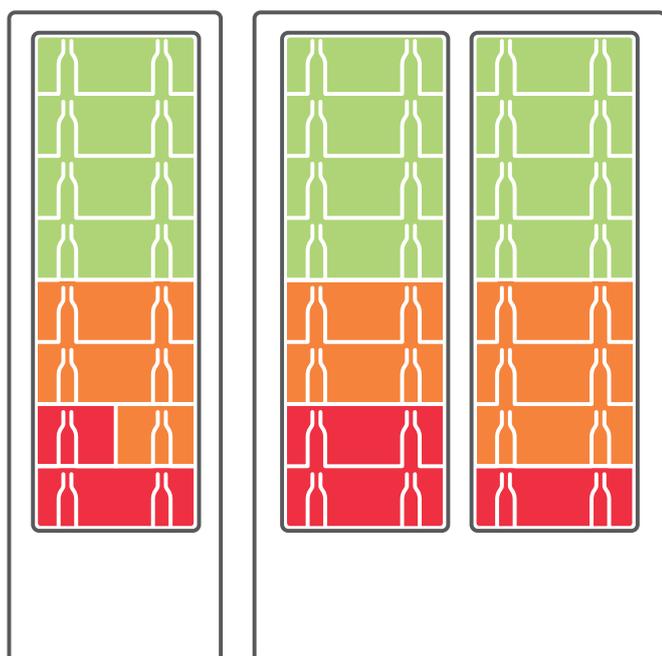


*Red drinks to be covered using a poster or fridge decal.

Single and double fridge planogram examples of 'red drinks off display' for fridges located behind the counter.

For more information about how to implement this nudge go to www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/easychoice

'Limit red drinks' was found to be successful when implemented correctly as per the *Healthy Choices* guidelines (at least 50 per cent of the drinks available are green, and no more than 20 per cent are red). The ability to use amber drinks to create variety in fridge layouts was considered a good way to reduce red drinks. Understanding and adhering to the traffic light system and categorisation were essential to ensure this nudge's success. A drinks planogram can be used to guide staff when stocking fridges to ensure fridge layout and percentage of red, green and amber products are kept consistent with the guidelines.



Single and double fridge planogram examples of 'limit red drinks' for fridges located behind the counter.

For more information about how to implement this nudge go to www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/easychoice

Educational nudges appear to have been most effective when a large number of people were exposed to the nudge in a manner that has a direct impact or relevance for those involved. For example, high numbers of children participating in a junior program or targeting a display canteen to facility managers who could most influence change. Educational nudges were also most successful when their nudge aligned with the strengths and existing delivery channels of the organisation, in addition to its needs and to the strengths of personnel, such as including nutrition education in coach training programs.

Unsuccessful nudges

'Water the cheapest option' was more difficult to implement, mainly due to a lack of knowledge around pricing and profit margins. Weather temperature and, to a lesser extent, product loyalty were found to be more significant drivers of purchase behaviour than price. Additionally, this nudge had the potential to have unintended consequences of increasing the profit margins of red items (e.g. prices of green items are reduced, while red item prices remain higher or increase in price), potentially making venues more dependent on the sale of these items.

There was **no evidence of success with the 'meal deal'** when water was paired with the trialed green food items (for example with fruit, yoghurt and salads). In addition, it was found to have unintended consequences when water was paired with red food items, because this increased the purchase of these unhealthy food items (which was not the intention of the nudges, but an example of how trials don't always work and how real-life application can be flawed).

There were **varying levels of success among the trials** due to differences in policies, communication, education, processes and evaluation. However, the good news is that a well-implemented nudge can lead to healthier choices with no impact on profits.

Evaluation recommendations

- Use nudges that work (e.g. red drinks off display or limit red drinks in canteen fridges) or design an educational nudge that matches the strength and needs of your organisation.
- Follow the *Healthy Choices* guidelines to classify food and drink into red, amber and green correctly.
- Appoint key influencers as champions of the nudge (e.g. coaches, parents, canteen managers, administrators) and articulate a clear rationale for change, working in partnership to effect the desired change.
- Start small and build on changes over time, evaluate how the changes have impacted your organisation and people's behaviour (e.g. retail profits, healthy food and drink purchasing, resources required, acceptability among the community), adapt where required (i.e. change something that's not working or take on an extra change where you are happy with the progress) and continue.

Perceived barriers to change

But we'll lose canteen revenue

Successful canteen nudge trials implemented using the Victorian Government's Healthy Choices guidelines reported that canteen revenue remained the same or increased.

“

We were concerned that sales would drop in our canteen as that is an important source of income for us, but we have seen very little change.”

– Liz Coles, Secretary, Geelong Central Netball Association

But players need energy for sport and children need a treat

“

We have a duty of care to look after these kids and hope we are setting a good example for them to follow. They don't need sugary drinks to succeed in their chosen sport.”

– Liz Coles, Secretary, Geelong Central Netball Association
Water is the drink of choice for health and sports performance benefits, especially for juniors.

But it'll be difficult to make the changes

What's difficult about putting some posters on one side of the fridge to cover 'red' drinks and making water the obvious choice on the other side of the fridge? The report showed that the 'red' drinks off display nudge was the easiest to implement and the most successful.

“

Simply reducing the amount of sugary drinks displayed, or removing them from display altogether... can increase the sale of healthier alternatives without impacting revenue.”

– Ryan Evans, GippSport Program Coordinator

But it's not my responsibility to tell people what to eat

“

We have had nothing but praise from our patrons/parents. They think it is wonderful we are supporting the health and wellbeing of our community. Parents are happier that less healthy options are no longer on display, which makes it easier for kids to choose healthy options”.

– Meg Smith, Café Coordinator, Ballarat Aquatic and Lifestyle Centre.

But people will just bring their own unhealthy food

In its 2014 'Soft Drink Free Summer' campaign across kiosks, cafes and catering services attached to 70 of its aquatic and recreation centres, YMCA Victoria found that despite decreasing the availability of red drinks, people did not bring their own from home. In fact, there was no change in drinks sales, with people purchasing green and amber items instead.

“

Exit survey data showed that customers have not responded to the healthier food provision by bringing their own 'red' food and drinks from home.”

– YMCA Soft Drink Free Summer campaign

However ...

Encouraging Australians to make healthy food and drink choices is vital, with some of the major causes of poor health among Australians being related to unhealthy diets³.

Only 5 per cent of adults and children are eating the recommended daily amount of fruit and vegetables^{4,5,6}.

SSBs such as soft drinks and sports drinks, are the largest source of sugar in the Australian diet (ABS 2016) and 47 per cent of children consume them daily (Cancer Council 2017).

Saying no to consuming sugary drinks and unhealthy food is not just down to individual choice and willpower. Unhealthy food and drinks are often cheaper and more convenient, and they are heavily promoted in many places, including sports clubs and venues.

3. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Australia's health, Australia's health series no. 15, 2016, Cat. no. AUS 199, AIHW, 2016.

4. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Australia's food and nutrition 2012, cat. no. PHE 163. AIHW, Canberra, 2012.

5. Rangan, AM, Randall, D, Hector, DJ, Gill, TP & Webb, KL 2008, 'Consumption of "extra" foods by Australian children: types, quantities and contribution to energy and nutrient intakes', European Journal of Clinical Nutrition, vol. 62, no. 3, pp. 356–364.

6. Department of Health and Human Services, Victorian Population Health Survey 2015: Selected survey findings, Melbourne. 2017, p. 49.

Here's some great examples of successful nudges

Red drinks off display/water drink of choice case studies

Small sports club Geelong Central Netball Club took all 'red' drinks off display so that only water was visible in the fridge. A range of healthier food options were also introduced into the canteen. The changes were embraced very quickly and the vast majority of children now buy just water, with some asking for the new milk or organic juice products. The change made no significant difference to the canteen revenue and feedback from parents has been very positive.

[Geelong Central Netball club](#)

Medium-size sports venue Gippsland Regional Sports Complex displayed water and 100 per cent juice on one side of a two-door fridge while sugar sweetened beverages were kept in the other side hidden behind GippSport posters promoting the consumption of water. The nudge was very successful: sales of 'green' drinks increased whilst sales of 'amber' drinks reduced without impacting revenue.

[Gippsland regional case](#)

Large sports venue Ballarat Aquatic and Lifestyle Centre removed all red drink items from display and food items were labelled as red, amber or green. The results were incredibly positive: sales revenue increased, water sales increased, more people were observed eating in the café and there were only a few requests for red drinks not available in the fridge.

[Ballarat Aquatic case study](#)

Limit red drinks/water drink of choice case studies:

Greater Shepparton City Council have increased the consumption of water at their KidsTown venue with a successful nudge campaign, which involved reorganising fridges to take majority of red drinks off display.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nc_2X89fRgQ&feature=youtu.be

Removing red drinks entirely

While not considered a nudge as such, Football Federation Victoria worked with Glen Eira Football Club to remove 'red' drinks from sale. During the trial period the club canteen sold only green and amber items: water, tea, coffee, hot chocolate and Diet Pepsi. Profits increased due to the sales of hot chocolate, which make a higher profit per sale than red drinks. This strategy was successful in reducing red drink sales and increasing healthier drinks without impacting on revenue.

www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/healthy-choice-food

Educational nudges:

This type of nudge plays to your organisation's strengths, by implementing changes that use existing programs and key influencers.

AFL Victoria delivered a nutrition module at ten Junior Level One Coach Education courses, attended by a total of 415 coaches. The course was designed to increase understanding of the nutrition requirements of junior footballers, and increase confidence among coaches who advise young footballers on best nutrition practices. This was backed up by simple messaging, fact sheets, two videos and newsletters.

www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/healthy-choice-food

Netball Victoria introduced the provision of healthy snacks at the beginning of five NetSetGo programs in Victoria. The initiative was a great success because young players were educated about the reasons for healthy snacks and parents no longer needed to supply a snack, which was often a 'red' item due to lack of time between school pick up and netball drop off.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=umf3xpPKIV8&feature=youtu.be

Basketball Victoria set up a showcase of healthy products at the Basketball Managers' Trade and Convention Show in a 'model' canteen fitted out with typical shelves and fridges. Four associations expressed interest in running their own canteen nudge project, resulting in two VicHealth State Sport Program supported nudge projects implemented by two basketball associations .

[Basketball vic case study](#)



How does my organisation get started?

STEP 1 Plan your approach

Get a picture of what you can do and what resources are available to help guide your approach. Visit the [Getting Started](#) page on the Healthy Eating Advisory Service (HEAS) website. Access loads of resources and consider joining the HEAS Mentorship program.

Download the [Healthy choices: policy guidelines for sport and recreation centres](#) and read through the five steps for implementation.

Consult Vicsport Healthy Eating resources: vicsport.com.au/healthy-eating

See what other sport organisations have done: www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/easychoice

Remember, not everything needs to be done at once, setting smaller achievable targets over time can be a very useful strategy.

STEP 2 Gain support

Seek leadership commitment from your organisation. Leverage support, funding and advice from your local council or sports association. Consider and align with existing healthy food and drink policies and/or requirements under local health and wellbeing or sport, recreation and leisure plans. Check with your council to see what resources are available locally.

STEP 3 Play to your strengths

Play to your organisation's strengths, use your key influencers and existing delivery channels to look at how you can promote healthier food and drink options within your current activities. Don't reinvent where you don't need to; consider [nudges](#) that other organisations have implemented successfully and are shown to be effective in encouraging healthier food and drink choices.

STEP 4 Involve and educate key influencers

Involve and educate your staff, committee, volunteers, key influencers and suppliers to get them on board and work with them in partnership. Make sure you have buy-in from multiple people from multiple levels of your business to counteract staff and volunteer turnover.

Have your canteen staff/volunteers complete free training on implementing the Healthy Choices guidelines online through [HEAS](#).

STEP 5 Make a healthy change

Deliver a healthy food and/or drink nudge and use the opportunity to promote why healthy choices are necessary to participants to ensure sustained behaviour change. Consider providing health education material around the canteen or club to encourage people to choose water and discourage sugary drinks. To keep the change on track, consider documenting and displaying planograms or guidelines, outlining the new procedures, to guide staff and volunteers.

STEP 6 Evaluate

Evaluate your nudge after a specified period, make changes if needed and, most importantly, keep going! One nudge doesn't have to be the end. Try something different – if you start with drinks, perhaps move onto nudges involving food. And after that, think about how healthy food and drink choices can be promoted elsewhere within your organisation, for example:

- offering healthier options like fruit to players
- educating key staff and players about the benefits of healthy eating
- using social media channels to promote healthier choices in your sport and show your commitment to the health and wellbeing of your community
- looking at ways your fundraising activities can encourage healthy food and drink choice.

STEP 7 Embed the healthy change

Once you've found the right strategy for your organisation, embed the Victorian Government's Healthy Choices guidelines in supplier agreements, facility management contracts or user group leases and develop a policy using the online [Healthy Eating Advisory Service](#) templates.

This will show your commitment to the promotion of healthier foods and drinks in your organisation and ensure others follow the new procedures.



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