



# KING COUNTY Healthy Vending Guidelines



## Why do we need Healthy Vending Guidelines?

Obesity and poor nutrition are serious problems in King County. A key strategy of obesity prevention is improving access to healthy food and reducing access to unhealthy food.

- More than half of King County adults and almost one-third of youth are overweight or obese, increasing the risk for serious health problems.
- Less than one-third of adults and youth report eating the recommended five fruits and vegetables per day, and one-third of youth report consuming one or more sodas on the previous day.

It's often difficult for King County residents to eat nutritious food when eating outside the home because there is a lack of healthy options—especially when making food and beverage selections from vending machines. Despite how common vending machines are, this is the first time guidelines for selecting healthier choices for vending machines are available in King County. Nutrition guidelines are an emerging strategy to improve the nutritional quality of food available in vending machines.

*The King County Healthy Vending Guidelines, adopted by the King County Board of Health, provide recommendations for the nutritional quality of food and beverages in vending machines to help make the healthy choice, the easy choice.*

## WHO CAN USE THESE GUIDELINES?

King County residents eat in a variety of community and work settings; all are appropriate places to implement the guidelines:

- Worksites
- Government buildings
- Hospitals
- Social service organizations
- Childcare & after-school care
- Schools & youth programs

## What goes in a healthy vending machine?

The goal of the King County Healthy Vending Guidelines is to make it easier for people to drink water and eat nutrient-rich whole food like:

- Vegetables: baby carrots, celery sticks
- Fruit: apples, oranges, pears, bananas
- Whole grains: granola bars, crackers, pretzels
- Nuts & seeds: trail mix, peanuts, almonds
- Fat-free & low-fat dairy: yogurt, cheese
- Lean meats, fish & beans: beef jerky, tuna, hummus

The guidelines are also intended to help you avoid eating unhealthy food and beverages with added sugars, saturated and trans fat, refined grains and sodium, like, candy, chips, cookies, fried foods, soda and energy drinks.

Choosing food for your vending machine based on food type (e.g. fruit, whole grains, etc) rather than simply looking at calories, fat, sodium and sugar will ensure that the healthiest options are available.

## HEALTHY VENDING GUIDELINES

### Examples of Food & Beverages

**Table 1** provides examples of food and beverages for three categories, **Healthiest**, **Healthier** and **Limited**. This is not an exhaustive list. Differences between food and beverages for each category are described in the first row of the table. The goal is to increase the number of Healthiest and Healthier items while decreasing the number of Limited items.

On the next page in **Table 2** you will find the necessary criteria for choosing Healthiest and Healthier food and beverages using fat, sugar and sodium levels, the primary way Healthiest and Healthier food are different.

| TABLE 1                       | HEALTHIEST   | HEALTHIER   | LIMITED  |
|-------------------------------|--|---|--|
|                               | Foods are nutrient-rich and primarily whole foods that contain low to no added sugar and sodium.   | Foods are more processed or refined with more added sugar, sodium or fat. They contain fewer nutrients for the amount of calories they provide.   | Foods are high in sodium, sugar, fat and refined grains and are less healthy.  |
| <b>Vegetables</b>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Fresh or dehydrated vegetables (e.g. baby carrots, celery, broccoli)</li> <li>Cup of soup with a quarter cup of vegetables</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Fresh or dehydrated vegetables with added salt, sugar or fat</li> <li>Baked potato chips</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fried vegetables</li> <li>Regular chips</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Fruits</b>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Fresh or dehydrated fruit (e.g. apples, oranges, pears, apricots, avocados, bananas)</li> <li>*Fruit packed in its own juice</li> <li>*100% fruit sorbet with no added sweeteners</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*100% frozen fruit juice bars with no added sweetener</li> <li>*Fresh or dehydrated fruit with added salt, sugar or fat</li> <li>Fruit packed in "lite" syrup</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fruit in heavy syrup</li> <li>Imitation fruit snacks and gummies</li> <li>Popsicles</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Grains</b>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>100% whole grain crackers, pretzels, rice cakes, pita</li> <li>100% whole grain cereals, granola or cereal bars, muffins</li> <li>Air popped or low-fat popcorn</li> </ul>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whole grain crackers, pretzels, pita, corn chips, soy crisps<sup>†</sup></li> <li>Whole grain cereals, granola or cereal bars, muffins, fig bars<sup>†</sup></li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Doughnuts, croissants, pastries, cookies, cakes, pies, pop tarts</li> <li>Full fat granola</li> <li>Products made with refined grains such as multigrain crackers, cereals and cereal bars</li> </ul>                                     |
| <b>Nuts &amp; seeds</b>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unsalted nuts or seeds</li> <li>Trail mix or fruit nut bars with only unsalted nuts and unsweetened dried fruit</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Salted nuts and seeds (low-sodium)</li> <li>Trail mix or fruit nut bars with salted nuts and added sugar</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Salted nuts and seeds</li> <li>Trail mix that includes candy</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Dairy</b>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Fat-free or low-fat plain yogurt</li> <li>*Fat-free or low-fat and low-sodium cheese</li> <li>*Low-fat and low-sodium cottage cheese</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Fat-free cream cheese</li> <li>*"Lite"/string cheese</li> <li>*Pudding, yogurt, frozen yogurt, ice cream made with fat-free or low-fat milk</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Full-fat ice cream</li> <li>Full-fat yogurt</li> <li>Full-fat cheese</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Meat, beans &amp; eggs</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low-sodium dried meat (jerky) or tuna</li> <li>Low-fat, low-sodium bean soup</li> <li>Hard boiled egg</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hummus</li> <li>Low-fat bean soup</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Full-sodium dried meat (jerky)</li> <li>Full-sodium tuna</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Beverages</b>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plain water</li> <li>Plain carbonated water (seltzer)</li> <li>Unflavored fat-free or 1% milk</li> <li>Unsweetened tea or coffee</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fat-free or 1% flavored milk (≤22 g sugar per 8 oz)</li> <li>100% fruit juice with no added sweeteners (≤8 oz serving for adults, ≤4 oz serving for children/youth)</li> <li>Zero- or low-calorie beverages (≤10 calories per 8 oz)</li> <li>Non-caloric, artificially sweetened beverages (diet)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2% milk, flavored or unflavored</li> <li>Whole milk, flavored or unflavored</li> <li>Calorically sweetened soda, teas, coffee drinks, lemonade, fruit drinks, sports drinks and energy drinks that exceed 10 calories per 8 oz</li> </ul> |

\***Shelf Life** A refrigerated vending machine may be necessary

<sup>†</sup>**Whole Grain** At least 51% of the grain ingredients are whole grains. When you read the ingredient label, the first two grain ingredients should be whole grains.

## HEALTHY VENDING GUIDELINES

### Nutrient Levels for Healthiest & Healthier Categories

For food and beverages in your vending machines, review the calories, fat, sugar and sodium content to determine which category they fall into.

Below are levels for the Healthiest and Healthier categories; food and beverages from the Limited category would fall outside these levels.

For example, granola bars could be Healthiest, Healthier or Limited, depending on how much sugar, fat and sodium are included. **Table 2** below will help you to determine which category they fall into.

| TABLE 2               |                          | FOOD  |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|---|
| Calories              | Healthiest and Healthier | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adults - No more than 250 calories per serving</li> <li>Children and youth - No more than 200 calories per serving</li> </ul>  |
|                       | Fat                      | <p><b>Healthiest</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No added fat for vegetables, fruits, nuts and seeds, dairy and meat, beans and eggs; for grains and soup follow the recommendations below for Healthier</li> </ul> <p><b>Healthier</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No more than 35% of calories from total fat, excluding nuts, seeds and nut butters as these can be high in fat but are considered a source of healthy fat—make sure these foods fall within acceptable calorie, sugar and sodium levels</li> <li>No more than 10% of calories from saturated fat</li> <li>Zero trans fat</li> </ul>   |
| Sugar                 | Healthiest               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No added sugar for all food groups except grains; no more than 6 grams of sugar per serving of grains</li> </ul>   |
|                       | Healthier                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No more than 35% of weight from total sugars, excluding whole fruit products or ingredients with no added sweeteners</li> </ul> <p>Added sweeteners include sucrose, fructose, glucose, corn syrup and high fructose corn syrup, honey, agave syrup, maple syrup, molasses, evaporated cane juice and fruit or fruit juice concentrates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Consideration for dairy products with sugar</i> - Pudding, yogurt, frozen yogurt or frozen milk desserts are limited to 30 grams total sugar per 8 oz</li> <li><i>Consideration for grains</i> - no more than 10 grams of sugar per serving</li> </ul> |
| Sodium                | Healthiest               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No more than 150 mg per serving</li> </ul>   |
|                       | Healthier                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adults - No more than 360 mg per serving</li> <li>Children and youth - No more than 200 mg per serving</li> </ul>  |
|                       |                          | BEVERAGES   |
| For children & youth* | Healthiest               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beverages should be sugar-free and caffeine-free</li> <li>Water</li> <li>Unflavored fat-free or 1% milk</li> <li>100% fruit juice ≤4 oz serving</li> </ul>   |
|                       | Healthier                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fat-free or 1% flavored milk (≤22 grams sugar per 8 oz)</li> <li>Sugar-free and caffeine-free beverages with artificial sweeteners (diet drinks) should be available only for high school students and only after school</li> <li><i>Note:</i> Sports drinks and vitamin drinks should not be available in schools</li> </ul>  |

\* <http://www.cdc.gov/Healthyyouth/nutrition/pdf/nutritionfactsheetschools.pdf>

## Best practices for implementing healthy vending guidelines

Using a team-based approach to establish healthy vending helps your organization to increase buy-in and to identify the right strategy to use to implement your healthy vending program.\* Here are some components of this approach:

- Select a recognized leader to champion the program
- Engage with stakeholders such as administrators, staff, food and nutrition service providers, students, parents, and others in the planning process
- Create an implementation plan with goals, strategies and timeline
- Pilot test to allow staff to identify healthy, tasty choices and adjust to new options
- Assess the environment: Determine where vending machines are located, what products are offered, and whether there are existing nutrition or vending policies. Find out what the current perceptions are around healthy eating among staff and other stakeholders.
- Conduct an annual review to evaluate and revise your vending guidelines as needed (e.g. with updates to Dietary Guidelines for Americans)

## Approaches for creating a healthy vending policy

Below are three approaches that can work together to help you create a healthy vending policy. To truly promote health in your organization through healthy vending, the third approach, providing only healthy choices, should be considered the long term goal.

### 1. Make healthy choices available

Most vending machines do not currently offer healthy options. Offering healthy food and beverages gives residents the ability to make a healthy choice when they select products from your vending machine.

- Add products from the Healthiest and Healthier categories and reduce Limited products
- An example of a target might be 75% products from the Healthiest (~50%) and Healthier (~25%) categories

### 2. Make the healthy choice the easy choice through pricing, marketing and education

Often the least healthy options in vending machines have the lowest price and most compelling marketing. This encourages people to purchase these products. These same strategies can be used to promote healthy options by lowering the price, increasing the visibility and highlighting the healthiest options.

- Use education and marketing to promote Healthiest and Healthier products
- Work with your vendor(s) to price Healthiest food and beverages at the lowest cost and Limited products at the highest cost
- Place Healthiest and Healthier food at eye level
- Use signage to identify which products are Healthiest and which are Healthier
- Limit advertising on vending machines to food and beverages that are found in the Healthiest and Healthier categories
- Ensure vending machines post calories next to each item in accordance with FDA requirements

### 3. Offer only healthy food and beverages

If you want to implement the most healthy approach, stocking only Healthiest and Healthier food is the best choice. Therefore the King County Board of Health recommends that you consider working toward 100% healthy vending.

- An example would be to eliminate Limited products completely, so that **all** food and beverages in your vending machines are from the Healthiest (~60%) and Healthier (~40%) categories within a three-year period assuming successful stakeholder engagement

\*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Improving the Food Environment Through Nutrition Standards: A Guide for Government Procurement. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention. February 2011.