



EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
MEDICAL TRUST

## Promoting Healthy Choices at Meetings



*Well to Serve*

*This material is for informational purposes only and is not intended to be professional medical advice or treatment. Always seek the advice of a health care professional with any questions about personal health care status, and prior to making changes in approaches to diet and exercise.*

Changing the way meetings have been held to include healthy foods and some physical activity is not a new idea – but it is certainly an idea whose time has come. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the U.S. has seen a dramatic increase in obesity and a growing epidemic of Type 2 diabetes. Addressing healthier ways to work is gradually becoming a standard for more and more employers. Developing a set of guidelines for healthy meetings will help you serve as a role model for your employees.

Today, more than ever, employers are making an effort to support the issue of healthy lifestyle choices for their employees. Since employees spend up to one third of their weekday, in the office — it is important to make healthy choices available to them. Structuring meetings to support healthy lifestyles is one step employers can take to care for their employees.

Changing how meetings are structured doesn't take a lot of work and it sends a message. It lets your employees know that you are thinking about their health and making changes to provide a healthier working environment. It allows each manager to be a 'champion' for healthy behaviors by following the guidelines set forth in this brochure.

Included in these pages are step by step instructions for getting everyone involved, from the leadership of your organization to the individual employees in each and every department. As you will see, everyone has a part to play in making meetings and events as healthy as possible.

## **Getting Started**

It doesn't take a lot of work to change routine meetings to 'healthy meetings'; all it takes is a little advertising and buy-in from the leadership of your organization.

The first place to start is to request a meeting with the leadership of your organization and present your reasons for wanting to have a 'healthy' quality to all meetings held at your workplace. Getting buy-in from the leadership is key if this initiative is to work. If the leadership of an organization is not on board with changing the culture of health there is less likelihood that the initiative will meet with success.

On the next page is a sample memo that can be adapted and submitted to your management to request a change in how meetings are conducted at your institution. Once the memo has been sent, a follow up meeting should be scheduled within a few days to go over the requested changes and to get a verbal agreement to move forward with the changes.

To: Bishop/Principal/Director

From: Wellness Committee/Administrator

Subject: Adapting a 'Culture of Health' for all Meetings

Date: January 1, 2011

In the spirit of supporting healthy lifestyles at work we are proposing that all meetings at the worksite follow 'healthy' guidelines. We would like your support for this initiative as we move forward.

It is important for you to be on board with these changes in order for this campaign to be successful. Without your ongoing support, the spirit of this campaign will be difficult to put into action.

We recommend that all meetings (workday, evening, offsite, large gatherings) be subject to the same healthy guidelines.

A follow up meeting will be scheduled early next week to review this proposal and answer any questions you may have. By accepting the meeting you are sending the message that you are supportive of this initiative and will provide ongoing support to make this campaign successful.

Following the meeting an email will go out to every employee to advertise that our organization is moving to a culture of conducting 'healthy' meetings. The email will stress that there will be healthful changes to how meetings are conducted going forward. This is a way to level set expectations and let employees know that you care about them and are taking steps to create and support a healthy work environment.

## **Guidelines for Healthy Meetings**

### **Scheduling meetings:**

- Try to limit the number of meetings that are held on any given day
- When possible, limit meetings to 50 minutes – or less
- For longer meetings, allow for periodic breaks – at least 1/50 minutes
- For shorter meetings – consider walking or standing meetings

### **Meeting locations:**

- Select rooms that can comfortably seat all participants
- Rooms with windows are preferred
- When possible, schedule a meeting outside

Conventions and offsite meetings – consider sites that provide healthy food options and opportunities for physical activity

### **Refreshments:**

- Determine which meetings require refreshments – not all meetings do
- Offer healthier food options
- Offer water instead of other beverages
- Try not to schedule meetings over the lunch hour, when possible
- Select a caterer/restaurant who offers healthier options
- Work with groups who prepare food
- Consider dietary restrictions/allergies and preferences

### **Incorporate movement:**

- Encourage movement before, during and after meetings
- Suggest movement that can be done sitting or standing so all employees can be included
- Have employees suggest types of movement to allow fuller participation
- Use 'icebreakers' to get increased interaction and creativity

### Sustainability:

- Make your meetings green – less paper, less waste
- Recycle cans, bottles, papers, etc.
- Come up with new ideas to make meetings ‘green’

### Scheduling Meetings:

When days are filled with one meeting after another it appears that a lot of work is getting done. But if there aren't breaks in between the meetings and staff has to run from one meeting to the next, most people will hit “meeting burnout”! You may want to set a policy that no more than four meetings (you pick the number) can take place on any given day. Limiting the number of meetings allows staff to work on other projects and to feel more refreshed when meetings are more spread out over the course of a day or a week. Sticking to this policy as much as possible lets staff know you value their work time and don't want to overload their schedules.

To get more physical activity into your daily lives, you can encourage this at your office by making sure that meetings don't last more than 50 minutes, or if they are longer than an hour that there is a break time during which movement is encouraged.

If the meeting you are scheduling only involves one or two other staff members, you may want to suggest a walking meeting. On nice days, a walk outside can really be a breath of fresh air and clear your mind while talking about an issue.

Standing meetings are becoming more popular. Standing meetings can be held when there is a short agenda and the meeting won't last more than a half hour. Because people are standing they are more likely to move through the subject matter more quickly and not get off track. Standing meetings are not for everyone, but if your staff is interested in trying one, give it a shot.

### Selecting Meeting Locations:



You may not have many choices for rooms where you hold your meetings — but if you do, try using some alternative areas to give your meetings a fresher feel.

When possible hold meetings in rooms that are well lit with natural light or well placed lighting. It is better to meet in a cooler room rather than a room that is very warm. Rooms that are too warm can zap your energy and make the meeting less dynamic. Always make sure seating is available for all participants (unless you are conducting a standing meeting). If you have access to an outdoor area and weather permits, you may want to hold some meetings outdoors.

If you are planning an offsite day-long meeting or a multiple day event you should consider a location that provides opportunity for physical movement or exercise, as well as healthy meals. Ask the facility about an onsite fitness room or the availability of safe walking or running areas. Requesting copies of menus ahead of time and selecting healthy options can ensure that you will have healthful meals throughout your meetings.

### Refreshments:



Not every meeting needs to be accompanied by food. When you do determine that you will provide food at a meeting be sure to make healthy food choices for the participants.

Keep in mind that many people have allergies to certain kinds of foods. For instance, offering salads as well as sandwiches allows people with any flour or wheat allergies to still enjoy their food. If you offer a pasta salad, also offer a green salad. Whenever possible, avoid serving nuts.

If you work with a restaurant/caterer be sure to tell them you want healthy food choices and that you want all sandwiches to be on whole grain or whole wheat bread and all salad dressings on the side. If a caterer can't provide the requested items, try another vendor until you can get the foods you want.

If the food is catered/provided by people who cook for the church or provide meals for staff events, ask if you can work with them on selecting the menu. Let them know that you have a goal of providing healthy snacks and meals. Share the suggested food list below with the kitchen staff to give them an idea of the things you would like to have served. Ask staff to submit healthy recipes they would like to have for the meetings.

When planning an event at a hotel or a conference center tell them you want to provide healthy offerings at every meal. Ask for old fashioned oatmeal to be a part of any breakfast offering, as well as other whole grain cereals. Ask for limited salt and butter to be used in the food preparation. If salad dressings or sauces are to be a part of the meal, ask that they be served on the side. Most facilities are more than willing to accommodate such requests. You can also request menu options and then work with the facility staff to select the healthiest choices for your event.

## Healthy Food Options

### Morning Meetings:

Below are suggestions for healthy food choices you may wish to consider for future meetings.

Whole wheat or multigrain bagels – bagels can be cut in halves or quarters and can be served with reduced fat cream cheese

Fruit platters

Yogurt sundaes (low fat yogurt, fresh fruit and a low sugar granola)

Bran muffins (use smaller size muffins or cut larger muffins in half)

Small portions of old fashioned oatmeal (add fresh fruit or honey)

### Lunch Meetings:



Roasted vegetable sandwiches on whole grain or whole wheat bread or wraps

Lean meat sandwiches (turkey, chicken, low fat/low sodium ham) with lettuce, tomatoes and mustard (Avoid chicken salad, tuna salad or other types of meats that are mixed with mayonnaise or heavy dressings)

Fresh fruit salads

Fresh vegetable trays with yogurt dips or hummus

Green salads with lots of vegetables (limit cheese or croutons added to the salads) serve with low fat dressing on the side

Roasted vegetable tray – with a large assortment of vegetables

Vegetable salads with lentils or other grains

Cups of soup (hearty vegetable soups, barley soups, lentil soups are fine – stay away from cream soups)

### Lighter snacks for mornings or afternoons

Assorted fruit tray

Assorted vegetable tray with large selection of vegetables with or without a humus or yogurt dip

### Beverages

Water – water in pitchers with ice is preferable to bottled water

Skim or low fat milk

Unsweetened ice tea – allow individuals to add sugar/sugar substitute as desired

Hot tea – regular, herbal and green teas

Coffee – regular & decaffeinated – (provide skim, low fat or fat free half & half)

Juice – be sure it is 100% juice and check the sugar content

Last choice – soda – if you must serve soda look for smaller cans and use diet sodas when possible.

### **Dinner Meetings:**

Green salads with dressing on the side – at least one low-fat dressing option

Brown rice tossed with vegetables

Vegetables – all types – roasted or steamed

Lean meats – chicken, turkey, pork

Fish – steamed, grilled or baked – any sauces served on the side

Sweet potatoes – a nice variation from white potatoes

Whole wheat pasta tossed with marinara sauce and steamed vegetables

### **Desserts (optional)**

Angel food cake with berries

Fresh fruit cup

Baked fruit – apples, pears, pineapple

## **Incorporate physical activity into your meetings**



Most employees spend hours a day sitting at their desks. In order to get a little more movement into their routine you can incorporate a little movement into your meetings. If the meeting is going to last more than an hour you may want to schedule a 'stretching break' at 45 – 50 minute intervals. Simple movements can keep people alert and focused.

If you are going to be in an all day meeting you may want to schedule some structured breaks into the day to give people the opportunity for some movement. Agreeing to meet in the morning for a group walk can be a great way to do some team building as well a great way to reflect on what you would like to accomplish in the meeting. Suggesting a topic they may want to think about while walking is one way to get them all brainstorming while exercising at the same time.

Standing up and doing some deep breathing exercises during a break can help you relax and relieve some tension after sitting for an hour or more. Raising your arms above your head as you take in the deep breath and lowering your arms as you breathe out can help get tension out of your neck and shoulders. Doing this two or three times is a good effective break.

Another suggestion is to have people stand up and walk around the table where they have been sitting. It's a very short walk but it breaks up the monotony of sitting still. Encourage people to stand for part of the meeting if they get tired of sitting. The more comfortable the participants are the more attention they can give to the topic at hand.

Ask staff to come up with ideas for incorporating some physical activity into their meetings. If suggestions from staff are used everyone will feel they are contributing to a healthier workplace culture.



## **Sustainability**

Think about ways you can cut down on waste materials during meetings

- Recycle any plastic and cans
- Serve water in pitchers rather than bottles
- When copies of power point presentations are needed – put 2 – 4 slides on each page to cut down on paper
- When ordering food, ask for only enough for the number of people attending the meeting – share any leftovers with others

## **Small Change, Big Difference**

By making some small changes to the way you conduct meetings in your organization you can become a 'champion' for healthy changes. In small ways we can introduce the importance of taking care of ourselves and show how even a meeting can give you an opportunity to think about ways to improve your health.

Each small change towards a healthier lifestyle helps the Episcopal church move closer to a culture of health. It is time to take this message to our employees, our congregations and our communities. We can all be 'champions' for healthier lifestyles where all are "Well to Serve".



Recipe for: \_\_\_\_\_  
From the kitchen of: \_\_\_\_\_  
Makes/Servings: \_\_\_\_\_



Ingredients:

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Please return this card to:    The Episcopal Medical Trust  
445 5th Avenue  
Attn: Stephanie Aballay  
New York, NY 10016



Recipe for: \_\_\_\_\_  
From the kitchen of: \_\_\_\_\_  
Makes/Servings: \_\_\_\_\_



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