



Overcoming Resistance to Healthy Choices¹

Although it's widely recognized that healthy eating is a critical part of a healthy lifestyle, there might still be some resistance to a healthy choices initiative. And even when you have full support, there are challenges to making any change. The following will help you prepare.

CONCERN: "You're taking away my freedom to choose what I eat."

RESPONSE:

- Children and families who use recreation facilities should be supported in their efforts to make healthy choices. To become a life-long habit, healthy eating requires both knowledge and a supportive environment
- Healthy choices should be just as available and appealing as unhealthy choices. Yet nutritious foods are rarely available and seldom promoted.
- People are still free to choose less healthy foods and beverages. They just won't be available in the recreation facility, which is already supporting healthy lifestyles through the promotion of physical activity.

CONCERN: "People will just go down the street to buy junk food."

RESPONSE:

- Applying the same logic, recreation facilities could justify the sale of cigarettes and alcohol. Providing nutritious food choices makes good health sense and is consistent with recreation's promotion of physical activity.

CONCERN: "We will lose revenue, which we need to run programs."

RESPONSE:

- Fundraising for recreation programming or equipment is often simply a matter of doing things the way they've always been done. And that has meant selling sugary, fatty and salty foods and drinks, without an eye to what message that sends to patrons, staff and the community.
- Foods used for fundraising are traditionally inconsistent with the physical activity or social aspect of recreation programs.
- Fundraising efforts with healthier foods and activities are just as successful as those relying on less healthy foods.

CONCERN: "This is too difficult to implement and we don't have enough resources."

RESPONSE:

- Resources are increasingly available to support healthy eating initiatives in recreation, schools and other areas (the Healthy Choices Toolkit is just one of the resources now available).
- Funding is also available to support these efforts, for which your facility or community might qualify.
- It's often necessary to start small, continue to look for partnerships and the necessary support, and work toward more and bigger changes.

¹ Adapted from Feeding the Future: School Nutrition Handbook, Calgary Health Region

MODIFIED ATMOSPHERE PACKAGING

Modified atmosphere packaging is a process where either the atmosphere within the package is removed entirely, referred to as vacuum packaging, or the atmosphere is altered, referred to as controlled atmosphere or gas flushed packaging. In each case, the objective is to extend the shelf life of perishable foods, while at the same time maintain or improve the quality of the product.

CONCERN: "Refrigerated vending costs too much."

RESPONSE:

- There are healthy products that don't require refrigeration.
- Some fresh products can be packaged in Modified Atmosphere Packaging which keeps them fresh longer.

CONCERN: "People won't buy the healthy choices."

RESPONSE:

- This argument has been proven wrong over and over again. There are many success stories within recreation, schools and other community spaces, in which sales increase with the availability of healthy choices.
- Appealing, affordable healthy choices have been hugely successful sales-wise.

CONCERN: "Preparing healthy foods takes too long in the concessions."

RESPONSE:

- Healthy foods don't take any longer to prepare than less healthy options.
- Prep times can be reduced by:
 - Planning ahead;
 - Researching quick and easy options; and
 - Assembling foods at the time of order (e.g. salad and sandwich bars).
- Pre-cut, pre-washed produce is a healthy option and saves time.

CONCERN: "Recreation patrons won't accept these changes."

RESPONSE:

- The facilities with healthy eating environments have received almost entirely positive feedback about the new options.
- Most patrons are happy to have more healthy choices.

CONCERN: "The vending company never re-stocks the healthy choices correctly; it's such a hassle to monitor."

RESPONSE:

- It's the responsibility of the vending company to re-stock products that comply with the Nutritional Guidelines. Perhaps a volunteer could monitor the machines to ensure this is happening.
- Significant problems—and possible solutions—should be discussed with the vendor.