



# HEALTHY EATING IN THE WORKPLACE

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR EMPLOYERS  
AND CATERING PROVIDERS

# Introduction

If you look after the wellbeing of your people, they will be healthier, happier, more productive and loyal, delivering better business outcomes. So, when our industry leader's forum of 30 Chief Executives asked us to set up a wide-ranging IGD programme to promote healthy eating nationally, we were determined to include the workplace as one of our activities.

We soon found there was little firm evidence to base our recommendations on and so we set out to fill that gap. We have been conducting one of the largest experiments in real world settings to test ways of encouraging people to make healthier choices, involving 17,000 people.

This has been delivered in partnership with world-renowned experts from the Behaviour and Health Research Unit at the University of Cambridge, supported by a long list of major food companies that volunteered to participate. The results have been fascinating.

We have proven that simple changes can make a substantial difference. We have also demonstrated that when approached with sensitivity, the changes can be very popular with the workforce too.

I'm delighted that we are now able to share our learnings with you through this practical guide. Our first aim has been to help the millions of people that work along the food and grocery chain but since our advice applies to any workplace, any employer can follow our lead.

I hope you feel inspired to use our guide to promote a healthier, happier and more productive team at your place of work.

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**Joanne Denney-Finch**  
Chief Executive, IGD

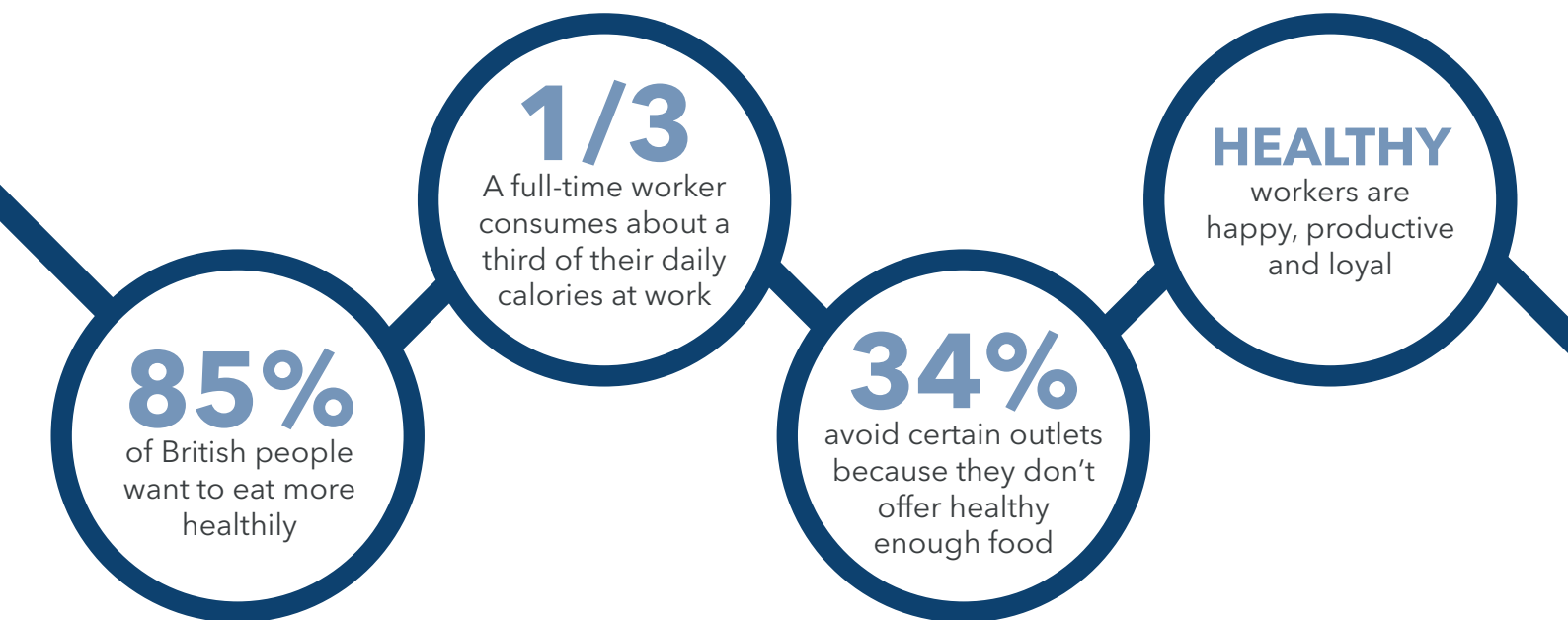
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Joanne Denney-Finch'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

# Executive summary

## About IGD

IGD is a research and training charity which sits at the heart of the food and grocery industry.

## Why healthy eating at work is so important



## Our ground-breaking experiments

We partnered with the Behaviour and Health Research Unit (BHRU) at the University of Cambridge to conduct a large-scale and precisely-measured experiment to find the most effective ways to encourage people to make healthier choices at work.

### The experiments involved...



**17,000**  
people



**19**  
workplace  
restaurants



**14**  
major food  
and grocery  
employers

This has been one of the biggest experiments of its kind conducted in real world settings, spanning offices, factories and depots across England.

We tested three areas and our advice is centered on this.



**Offer a  
balanced choice**



**Reduce  
portion sizes**



**Provide calorie  
information**

Statisticians at the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford assessed the results. Adapting the range to be healthier and reducing portion sizes both proved very effective leading to a reduction in calories sold across all but one of the sites involved. Labelling calories was less conclusive but very popular.

The managers involved were pleasantly surprised by the reactions.

**"We thought there was going to be a bit more uproar but it actually went quite pleasantly well."**

*Catering manager at manufacturing site*

**"I did expect people to notice that their portion of lasagne was a bit smaller, but they actually haven't, or if they have, they haven't been concerned about it."**

*Account manager for manufacturer*

So, we have demonstrated that if managed well, most people are happy when changes are made in their workplace restaurants to support their wellbeing.

**With IGD  
we have  
set up one  
of the most  
ambitious  
studies to  
date for  
healthier  
eating in the  
workplace."**

**Professor Theresa M. Marteau,  
PHD. FMedSci**

**Behaviour and Health Research  
Unit of the University of Cambridge**



% of workforce favouring or not  
objecting to the changes

## Spreading the learnings

Many of the companies involved are now rolling out changes across their business.

**"I am using the learnings to develop Mars' healthy cafeteria standards for our global business."**

*Helen Wray, Associate Health and Wellbeing Lead, Mars*

**"We're talking about it a lot to clients who are keen to start making small changes and monitor the impact that it has."**

*Nicky Martin, Head of Nutrition, Compass Group UK and Ireland*

Through this experiment we learned an enormous amount about the practicalities involved in introducing change in a catering environment. Now, through this guide, we are sharing our learnings via simple and practical tips.

## We recommend five steps for a healthy eating programme in your place of work.

1. Get the right people on board
2. Assess your current offering and set some targets
3. Make a series of changes
4. Measure your impact
5. Keep up to date

Offer a  
balanced choice

**78%**

Reduce  
portion sizes

**66%**

Provide  
calorie  
information

**97%**





# Why healthy eating at work is so important

Consumer interest in health is on the rise. We regularly speak to British shoppers and 85% aspire to improve their diet in some way<sup>1</sup>.

Most food and drink companies would agree they have an important part to play in supporting consumer health. Many have shown their commitment through steps such as providing more nutrition information on pack, adjusting recipes to make them healthier, promoting products more carefully and introducing new healthier options.

However, why support consumer health without also considering your own employees? For a full-time worker, consuming around a third of their daily energy intake at work<sup>2</sup>, this environment has a big influence on their diet and health.

There's also growing recognition that if you look after the wellbeing of your people at work, they will be healthier, happier, more

productive and loyal, delivering better business outcomes<sup>3</sup>.

**A company employing 1,000 people could lose more than £126,000 a year in lost productivity, solely due to obesity<sup>4</sup>.**

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## Business benefits

- A popular measure that can help you to attract and retain employees
  - A visible way of showing that you care about your people
  - Healthy workers are happier, more productive and loyal
  - For caterers, this can help you win new contracts and maintain your clients
-

**Much of our behaviour, that is shaped by the environment, takes place outside of conscious awareness. Changing the environment could therefore help tackle obesity.”**

**Professor Theresa M. Marteau,**  
PHD. FMedSci

**Behaviour and Health Research  
Unit of the University of Cambridge**

So, employers can win plaudits from their people this way, provided they act with sensitivity. Almost nine in ten people (89%) agree ‘it is up to me to follow a healthy balanced diet’<sup>1</sup>. People like to be helped and advised rather than corralled into following any particular diet.

Choices can be framed in various ways. Many of our behaviours as consumers are influenced by the environment surrounding us. For instance, products displayed at eye-level in a store are more likely to be selected than those towards the floor.

The same applies in staff restaurants. Small, sometimes unnoticed changes in how the options are presented (sometimes called ‘nudges’) can encourage healthier choices, freely and happily made. This has been the thinking behind our experiments.

IGD works closely with food and grocery companies throughout the chain including farming, manufacturing, retailing and catering. This sector is a huge employer. For instance, in the UK, it employs almost four million people (around one in seven of all workers)<sup>5</sup>.

Our commitment to healthy eating at work is shared by leading food and grocery companies. Many of those who participated in our experiments are now rolling out changes across their business.

However, all employers and employees can benefit from our learnings. We want to share them as widely as possible to inspire more workplaces, as they seek to attract and retain a healthy, happy and productive workforce.

<sup>1</sup>IGD ShopperVista 1,700+ All shoppers, Apr '18

<sup>2</sup>NHS Choices: Boost your health at work, 2018

<sup>3</sup>British Heart Foundation, Health at work – Economic evidence for workplace health, 2016

<sup>4</sup>National Institute of Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE), 2012

<sup>5</sup>Defra Food Statistics Pocketbook, Sept '16



# The experiments

## Background

We set out to conduct a ground-breaking series of experiments to test what works best to promote healthy eating at work.

We wanted our advice to be based on credible and robust evidence. That's why we partnered with world-renowned experts from the Behaviour and Health Research Unit at the University of Cambridge.

## Who participated

Some 19 workplace restaurants participated involving around 17,000 employees between 2016-18.

The workplaces were spread across regions in England. They included office, depot and manufacturing sites.

## What we tested



### Offer a balanced choice

We increased the proportion of healthier food and drinks to at least 50% for cooked meals, snacks and cold drinks.



### Reduce portion sizes

We reduced the portion size of main meals, sides, desserts and cakes.



### Provide calorie information

We labelled the calorie content of food and drink prominently at the point of choice.

These interventions were chosen by the BHRU based on results of previous smaller scale experiments.

The BHRU measured impact over a 16-week period by comparing the calories purchased before and after each intervention. They corrected for anomalies, such as special events.

There are other components to a healthy diet, but calories are relatively easy to measure, and we needed to keep the experiments manageable.





# Our advice

Use this section to find out what you can do to help people eat healthier at work.

Our advice has been drawn from our experience and developed with the help of our expert group of nutritionists, catering companies and chefs, wellbeing specialists and communications professionals. It is centered on the areas we tested.

If you're keen to explore other things you could try to encourage healthier eating in the workplace, beyond the areas we tested, head to p22.

## What we tested



**Offer a balanced choice**

p10



**Reduce portion sizes**

p14



**Provide calorie information**

p18



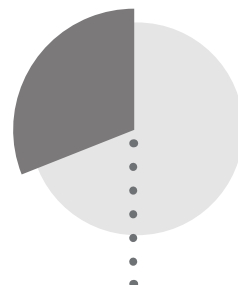


# Offer a balanced choice

Altering the range of food and drink available in your restaurant to tip the balance in favour of health is a proven route to encourage healthier eating.

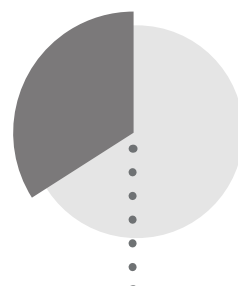
It needs to be done skilfully. Each workplace is unique as are its people. Making sure your restaurant offers enough choice to appeal to different food preferences and dietary needs is vital.

There is a strong commercial case for getting your offer right on health too.



**31%**

would eat out more often if healthier options were more available<sup>1</sup>



**34%**

avoid some outlets because they don't offer healthy enough food<sup>2</sup>

## Our advice

Replace some of your less healthy food and drink products with healthier versions.

Assess which parts of your range are most in need of healthier options (including breakfast, snacks, soft drinks, main courses, desserts) and prioritise these.

Use *How to rebalance your range* (p13) as a guide or consult with a registered nutritionist or dietitian to tailor these criteria to meet the specific dietary needs at your location.

<sup>1,2</sup>IGD Eating Well and Eating Out, 2018





# 78%

either favoured or did not object to the changes remaining in place

## Our experiments

The food and drink offering at each staff restaurant was tailored to its employees. Factors like company values, demographics, type of work and shift patterns influenced this too but, in each case, we found scope for a healthier balance.

Each workplace consulted with our researchers at the BHRU to review its current offering and agree on a series of healthier product swaps. Some already offered many healthier options, whereas others had a more limited range.

It was easier in restaurants that had planned their menus well in advance.

The substitution of some products posed greater risks to morale than others. A classic example was fish and chips on a Friday. Through careful consultation with catering teams, we only ran into a small number of objections to the changes we made.

The most sensitive area, we found, was soft drinks, where the reaction varied. So we learned to approach this with caution.

**"They're set in their ways, especially with drinks, so we thought there was going to be a bit more uproar but it actually went quite pleasantly well."**

*Catering manager at a manufacturing site*

## Our results

Increasing the proportion of healthier options significantly reduced calories purchased across the six worksites, by an average of 7%.



# Our top tips

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1. You probably already provide some healthier menu choices. Offer these more often to tilt the balance towards healthier options
2. Plan your menus ahead. You'll find it easier to identify which days need more healthy options
3. If you provide soft drinks and snacks, offer alternatives with less sugar, fat and salt
4. Public Health England's 'One You' campaign aims to support people to be more calorie aware when they're out and about. It suggests around a 400-600-600 kcal split over breakfast-lunch-dinner. Use this as a guide when planning your menus
5. As well as satisfying nutritional needs, food and drink brings enjoyment. Bear this in mind when you are swapping products. Take a series of steps rather than changing everything at once
6. Some recipes can be made healthier by altering the ingredients or cooking methods whilst remaining just as tasty. Visit [igd.com/healthyeating](https://www.igd.com/healthyeating) for more tips and inspiration on making your products healthier
7. Experiment with a variety of healthier options and then be guided by which is most popular. Don't stick to products that simply don't sell
8. If you cater for more than one restaurant, don't adopt a one size fits all rule. You can apply consistent principles but still be guided by differences in customer demand
9. New products could benefit from extra support in the early stages. Try giving healthier products pride of place on the counter, an introductory discount or eye-catching signage
10. Labelling products as "healthy" will attract some people but deter others. Get a feel for whether it helps or hinders demand in your restaurant. Consider using descriptors such as 'hand-made' or 'fresh' that don't hint at sacrifice

Take care when making claims about food or nutrition such as 'low fat', 'light', 'high protein', 'wholesome', 'filling', 'good for you'. There are EU regulations governing the use of Nutrition and Health Claims so take time to familiarise yourself with these. *See Further Information.*

11. Look for ways to add excitement to healthier options. You might feature seasonal produce or a 'tour' of healthy options provided by different world cuisines for example
12. People often cite price as a barrier to eating well. Price healthier options in line with other products, or better still, at a discount. If you offer a meal deal, include healthier options in the promotion

## How to rebalance your range

During the experiment, the volunteer restaurants were guided by the principles below. This is one approach you could take to ensure a good nutritional balance.

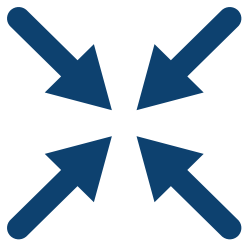
These principles draw from Public Health England guidance suggesting an approximate 400-600-600 kcal split between breakfast - lunch - dinner. For a complete meal, the 500-kcal limit allows 100 kcal for additional vegetables and/or drinks for instance.

For drinks and snacks, the Government Buying Standards (which apply to publicly owned premises such as hospitals) could provide inspiration.



	Offer more 'healthier' items	Basic principles
<b>Meal centre</b> e.g. fishcake	Less than 300 kcal per serving	Limit meal centres and complete meals containing more than 300 and 500 kcals respectively to one menu option per day
<b>Complete meal</b> e.g. lasagne	Less than 500 kcal per meal	
<b>Sides</b>	Vegetable and carbohydrate sides without added fat	Limit sides with added fat to one menu option per day
<b>Sandwiches or equivalents</b>	Less than 350 kcal per serving	Increase availability of healthier sandwiches to at least 50%
<b>Savoury snacks*</b>	Less than 120 kcal per pack	Increase availability of healthier snacks to at least 50%
<b>Sweet snacks*</b>	Less than 150 kcal per pack	
<b>Cold drinks*</b>	Less than 50 kcal per pack	Increase availability of reduced or no added sugar drinks to at least 50%

*\*Food or drink consisting of fruit, nut, or seeds with no added sugar or salt should not be limited*



# Reduce portion sizes

Most people, in most circumstances, tend to accept and consume more if they are offered bigger portions.

Cutting back on portions is therefore an effective approach to help people eat less without affecting taste or choice.



## 1 in 5

Eating smaller portions is tactic used by 1 in 5 of people seeking to improve their diet<sup>1</sup>

## Our advice

Review your complete food and drink offering to understand which items could be reduced in size.

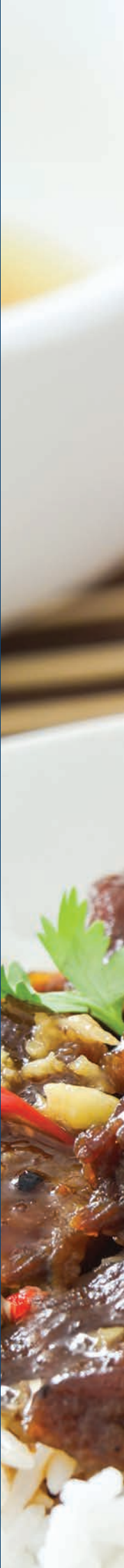
Some products may come pre-packed with limited scope for change but other items are likely to be adjustable.

As a rule of thumb, aim for around a 10% reduction in portion size across multiple food categories.

Where you can, also reduce prices, to protect value for your restaurant customers.

Use our advice as a guide or consult with a registered nutritionist or dietitian to tailor these criteria to meet the specific dietary needs at your location.

<sup>1</sup> IGD ShopperVista 1,700+ All shoppers, Apr '18





## Our experiments

In the lead up to our experiment, some managers assumed smaller portions would disappoint their customers. In practice, minor reductions went almost unnoticed.

**"I did expect people to notice that their portion of lasagne was a bit smaller, but they actually haven't, or if they have, they haven't been concerned about it."**

*Account manager for manufacturer*

Managers consulted with the BHRU to agree which portions could be reduced. Most restaurants were already selling pre-packaged food and drink products in the smallest available size (such as bottled and canned drinks). But there was plenty of scope to reduce the size of some of the foods prepared in-house.

Restaurant managers prepared by educating their teams and making sure they were well equipped to reduce portion sizes. For example, food servers were asked to cut 12 portions of lasagne rather than 10 or to use a slightly smaller ladle to serve dishes like curries.

**"...we already had smaller ladles and cutting up the tray-bakes wasn't an issue."**

*Account manager for manufacturer*

Restaurants were asked to reduce prices proportionately to portion size. There are fixed costs involved in providing food, so it

may not always be commercially realistic to cut prices proportionately, but the reduction helped to ensure a good reception for the changes.

**"The breakfast granola pots were huge, now that they're smaller more people are buying them. The size and price was putting people off"**

*Catering manager at manufacturing and office site*

Some sites made more changes than others; those that reduced the most portions saved the most calories.

Despite initial reservations, managers reported few complaints about portion sizes and customer feedback suggested most employees were positive or indifferent to the changes. Some even chose not to reveal that portion sizes had been reduced.

**"...we just felt that seeing as how nobody had really noticed, we didn't want to draw their attention to it"**

*Wellbeing manager at office site*

## Our results

Reducing portion size reduced the calories purchased at all six sites. The result was marginally short of passing the statistical significance test.



# 66%

either favoured or did not object to reduced portions remaining in place

# Our top tips

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1. Involve the right people when deciding which products to reduce. For instance, it wouldn't make sense to trim a bought-in muffin, but your procurement team might be able to source a smaller version or your chef might prepare one in-house
2. Aim for around a 10% reduction in portion size but be pragmatic. Don't create extra work by insisting on this in every case, such as a whole chicken breast. See the page opposite for inspiration
3. For pre-portioned food that is not prepared in-house, check whether you're already offering the smallest available size (this includes items like soft drinks, single-serve confectionary etc.) or request help from suppliers (who could perhaps cut a whole cake into smaller slices for example)
4. In some circumstances it can be tempting to serve bigger portions, for example towards the end of service to use up the food. Try to avoid this and have procedures in place to ensure portion sizes are consistent throughout service and whoever is on shift. You could include portion guidance on recipe specifications for example using colour-coded ladles to serve wet dishes
5. Providing a choice of small or large portions can work well in some circumstances. In these cases, offer the smaller size as the default. However, delivering a choice of portions across your whole range would be complex, so it's better to scale back on size where possible
6. Get a feel for whether it helps or hinders demand if you draw attention to smaller portions. It might attract some people but deter others. You could make a series of subtle reductions over time rather than all at once
7. Try to maintain good plate coverage when reducing portion size and avoid 'empty space' - customers could perceive they're getting poor value for money if a food package appears half full. Consider how your food is served and the size of your crockery and packaging
8. It can be difficult to predict customer demand as you make changes but you will get a feel for this over time by reviewing sales and food waste. You might decide to prepare food in smaller batches as you'll be getting more servings from the same ingredients than you did before
9. Review your pricing structure and where possible, reduce prices proportionate to the reduction in size. If that's impractical, consider other ways to offer your customers great value, perhaps incentivising vegetable uptake or offering free fruit
10. There may be a widespread perception in your business that customers prefer larger sized portions, but we found this isn't always the case. Sometimes smaller portions achieve higher sales. Challenge these perceptions but keep a close eye on sales and customer feedback as changes are introduced. Be prepared to change again until you get it right

## How to reduce portion sizes

During the experiment, the volunteer restaurants were guided by the principles below. This is one approach you could take to reduce portion sizes.

There is no need to reduce portions of fruit and vegetables or starchy carbohydrates such as potatoes, bread, rice and pasta if they are cooked without added fat, salt and sugar. Where possible, encourage people to choose wholegrain and higher fibre options.

See the Eatwell Guide in *Further Information* for more information about a healthy, balanced diet.



## Practical ways to reduce portion sizes

### Main meals - the principal element of a meal

- Slice more portions in a tray (such as pies)
- Serve fewer individual pieces (such as scampi)
- Serve wet foods (like casserole) with a smaller ladle

### Sides, including carbohydrates with added fat, salt or sugar (such as chips), protein pots (like tuna or cheese)

- Plate up one less spoonful or half spoonful
- Use smaller pots

### Desserts

- Use a smaller serving spoon
- Portion dessert into smaller bowls
- Reduce pot size

### Cakes and tray-bakes

- Cut into a greater number of slices

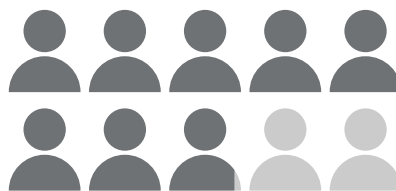




# Provide calorie information

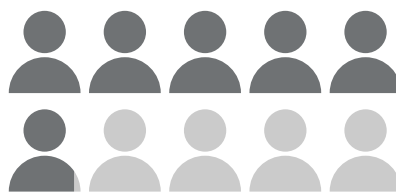
Nutrition information helps consumers make informed choices. In a catering environment, showing calories is the priority because more detailed nutrition information is difficult to absorb in this setting.

A growing number of commercial catering businesses are providing calorie information, so your colleagues will increasingly expect to see this in the workplace too. In the United States, calorie labelling has become mandatory for restaurant chains above a threshold size and the UK government is consulting on a similar proposal.



## 79%

Almost eight in 10 people agree that menus should include the number of calories in food and drinks<sup>1</sup>



## 59%

Almost six in 10 people say they would be more likely to eat and buy from establishments where there is calorie labelling on food menus/packaging<sup>2</sup>

## Our advice

Display the calorie content of all products prominently at the point of choice.

This might be on signs on or above the counter, on menus or on menu boards, shelf edges and product packaging.

<sup>1</sup> Public Health England (2018)  
<sup>2</sup> Diabetes UK (2018)

## Our experiments

We introduced calorie labels in six workplace restaurants serving around 5000 employees. Compared to our other experiments, the results were less conclusive but the labels were well received at all sites. So, although healthier ranging and smaller portion sizes appear to be more effective at reducing total calorie intake, labelling is popular and particularly helpful for people actively seeking to lose weight.

Providing calorie information was relatively easy to introduce and all the worksite managers were supportive.

**"Because we were adding information for people and not taking anything away from them, I think that was a positive thing"**

*Catering manager at production site*

**"Once you just get on with it and when you start to understand, actually it's fine"**

*Catering manager at office site*

The experiment did require a concerted effort during the set up and so the sites were given at least two months to prepare. Everyone rose to the challenge and the system proved generally easy to maintain thereafter.

Most of the restaurants were using a recipe management system to manage costings and allergens. The nutritional information for each ingredient is stored in a database, allowing the catering manager to input each recipe and serving size to calculate its calories.

Before the experiment, some sites were already providing nutritional information whereas for others, it was a new concept. Procedures were reviewed to ensure the accuracy of information, for instance, training staff to follow all recipes correctly.

For sites already providing nutrition information, the experiment involved focusing on calories and making this as prominent and consistent as possible.

Restaurant managers used guidance from the BHRU to display calorie information clearly. Some also chose to provide information in kilojoules (kJ) but this was displayed less prominently than calories.

**"I had no idea how many calories were in the lovely flapjacks the restaurant bakes. Really helpful!!"**

*Office employee*

**"Changed my decisions on what to eat for the better. I know that full fat cheese is high in calories but choose to forget. When it is printed in front of you, you can't ignore it!"**

*Employee at office and manufacturing site*

After the experiment, most (74%) said they'd like the calorie labels to remain in place permanently.

**"...It was noticed and people were pleased to see it. They were surprised actually, and it was driving them to make difficult choices."**

*Catering manager at office site*

## Our results

Labelling calories significantly reduced energy (kcal) purchased at one site by 6.6% but not at the other five sites.



# 97%

either favoured or did not object to  
calorie labels remaining in place

# Our top tips

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1. Allow enough time for the initial set up. Once that's done, there is less work required to maintain the labels
2. Use a recipe management system to make calculating calories easier and deliver other benefits such as managing allergens and tracking costs
3. Make sure the calorie information on the label reflects the portion served, for example per meal or per slice or ladle
4. Involve a nutrition expert in the setup, from your own business if you have one or from a catering supplier or a registered nutritionist or dietitian
5. Insist on calorie information from your suppliers if you buy in pre-prepared products
6. Check the labels can be read clearly from where customers may be standing, remember that some people's eyesight may not be as sharp as yours!
7. Do your best to achieve complete coverage of calorie labelling. We found that if only some products are labelled, the value of the information for customers is considerably reduced
8. Do your best to make the calculations accurate but don't fixate on 100% precision, it's unrealistic
9. Make sure the labels are easy to read, for instance use contrasting colours for the background and foreground and a font that is easy to read

Make sure your labels are compliant with legal requirements in your country. Businesses that choose to provide energy information in the EU for instance, must display values in both kJ (kilojoules) and kcal (kilocalories)

## How to display your labels

Label as much as possible, including:

- Main meals (including side dishes)
- Cold drinks and snacks (including all confectionary, sandwiches, protein pots etc.)
- Breakfast selection (both hot and cold selection)
- Condiments (if portioned)

Keep the labels consistent. So, if pre-packed products already have nutrition information, provide a separate calorie label applying your house style.



Include the following information on the labels:

- Name of item
- Price (if appropriate)
- Calories per portion for example per meal or per slice or ladle

Make sure the calorie information is prominent alongside any other details on the label.

Position the labels clearly at the point of choice. This could include:

- Menus (printed or electronic via email or screens)
- Labels on products (printed or hand written)
- Shelf edging at point of choice
- Signs behind the counter
- Tent cards next to products

Ensure they can be easily seen and read from where the customer is standing.

### For example:

## Baked Beans 110 Calories

(per serving)  
(460KJ/110Kcal)

## Croissant

£1.00  
**260 Cals**  
(1040KJ/260Kcal)



# Other things you could try

If you're keen to explore other ways to encourage healthier eating in the workplace, beyond the areas we tested, here are some more options to consider.

We don't have the same evidence to support these so we recommend you measure the impact to see if they work for you.



# Pricing

Customer demand is influenced by price in a workplace restaurant, as in any other environment. So, you could subsidise your healthier choices, perhaps with a slight price increase for other options, to maintain your revenue.

The deep-seated perception of consumers that eating healthily tends to be more expensive is one of the barriers to better nutrition, so this is something you could challenge in the workplace.

At the very least, make sure value for money isn't acting as a barrier to healthy eating in your restaurant. So don't treat healthy products as a niche that merits a price premium.

If price forms part of a contractual agreement with your catering supplier, consult them to make sure any changes work for them too.

# Making products healthier

Our Shopper Vista research reveals that 78% of people are 'happy for food companies to change the recipe of products to make them healthier, provided they're still as tasty'.<sup>1</sup>

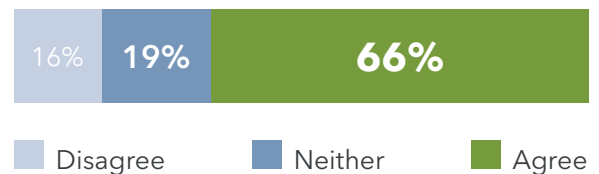
It is important not to disaffect your customers, but it is possible to adjust recipes and cooking methods to be healthier while matching, or even improving the taste.

Visit [igd.com/healthyeating](https://igd.com/healthyeating) for more tips and inspiration on making your products healthier.

## Our top tips

1. Review your pricing structure and price healthier options in line with the rest of your offering, or better still, cheaper. For example, check that a portion of fruit is cheaper than a portion of hot or cold dessert
2. Consider other ways you can offer your customers great value, perhaps incentivising healthier options (such as a discount or loyalty scheme) or offering free fruit for instance

### Eating healthily is more expensive than eating unhealthily



<sup>1</sup>IGD ShopperVista (Base: 1,700+ Shoppers, April 2018)

## Our top tips

1. Where possible, use healthier cooking methods as default such as baking, grilling or steaming instead of frying
2. Check where you can make simple ingredient swaps, such as swapping whole milk for semi-skimmed
3. Consider your range holistically and think about ways you can add goodness in as well as gradually reducing levels of fat, sugar and salt

# Placement of products

If you put products in people's direct line of sight and in easy reach, they are more likely to grab them. Even those with the strongest willpower may find it difficult to resist an impulse treat at the checkout.

More and more retailers have voluntarily decided not to display snacks that are high in fat, salt or sugar at their checkouts or other queuing areas. Think about how you can use the same tactics to promote healthier products.

This applies, in particular, to vending machines. Some 85% of food and drink vending machines can be found in the workplace<sup>1</sup>. A recent trial that altered the range and placement of products in hospital vending machines suggests it is possible to support healthier choices without affecting profits<sup>1</sup>.

## Our top tips

1. Consider how to use product placement to encourage healthier behaviours such as making tap water highly visible and freely available and offering fruit at tills
2. Avoid placing foods and drinks that are high in fat, sugar or salt by the till or in other easy to grab areas
3. Experiment with encouraging healthier options in your vending machines, such as placing them at eye level
4. Consider storing your salt cellars away from the tables, so they remain available but require extra effort

# Tableware

There is some evidence to show that people serve themselves more if they use larger tableware, including plates, bowls, bottles and glasses<sup>2</sup>. This can contribute both to overeating and food waste.

So if you are planning to replace any of these, consider ordering a smaller size. People may also perceive a portion to look more satisfying on a slightly smaller plate.

## Our top tips

1. If you have self-serve areas, check whether you could use a smaller plate or container to encourage people to serve less, particularly for more indulgent options such as desserts
2. If you have separate plates or dishes for fruit and vegetables, don't reduce the size of these

<sup>1</sup> Public Health England (2018) Hospital vending machines: helping people make healthier choices

<sup>2</sup> Hollands et al, 2015 (See *Further Information* for full reference)



# Company stories

We asked four of our volunteers to share their experience of taking part.



# Stuart Blacow

John Lewis Partnership

Stuart manages the in-house catering and hospitality offer at the John Lewis Partnership Head Office in London where calorie labels were introduced.



**Q: What role has healthy eating previously played in your job?**

A: Over the last few years, employee wellbeing has been at the centre of our strategy when developing our catering and hospitality offer. Healthy eating is very much at its foundation.

**Q: Why are you an enthusiast for promoting healthy eating at work?**

A: I think it's extremely rare to find anyone who does not have some interest in what they are eating and that includes me as well! I've always been passionate about food and have spent most of my catering career as a chef on the front line of service. I'm very aware of the effect of what we eat, and this has naturally changed my habits to be healthier and in turn, promote healthy eating to others.

**Q: What was your initial reaction when you were approached about taking part in an experiment?**

A: I was very keen to take part - it's something I really wanted to deliver for our customers and saw this as a great enabler to progress what we do.

**Q: Who else at the John Lewis Partnership has been vital in making this happen?**

A: My team has really embraced the changes needed to conduct the experiments robustly and have benefited from working through the process. Our suppliers have also been fully supportive, providing the information needed to make calorie labelling happen.

**Q: What challenges did you have to overcome in introducing calorie labels?**

A: Ensuring the information we provided on the calorie labels was accurate was the biggest challenge. My team had not done this before, so we did lots of checks before introducing the labels.

**Q: What have been your biggest learning points?**

A: The whole team has a much better understanding of the calorie content of our food offer, which gives us a great foundation to build on in the future.

**Q: What response have you had from your restaurant customers?**

A: Overwhelmingly positive, customers really appreciated the extra information and it's helped them make more informed food choices.

**Q: Will you continue providing this information?**

A: Yes definitely, it's been a great success.

**Q: What advice would you give to others thinking about introducing calorie information?**

A: Don't be afraid of the change, catering is constantly evolving, and your customers will always be grateful for information about what they're eating.

# Nicky Martin

Compass Group UK & Ireland

Nicky is the Head of Nutrition for Compass Group UK & Ireland, a business that serves millions of customers every day. Nicky supported two of these workplaces to rebalance their range.



**Q: What are your main responsibilities in heading up nutrition for Compass?**

A: We provide support and guidance to Compass Group and its clients to support good health, wellbeing and nutrition.

**Q: Was it easy to identify which parts of your range would most benefit from more healthier options?**

A: Yes, as we hold nutrition information for everything we could easily identify areas to address with healthier options.

**Q: What kind of products did you swap for healthier versions and what did you decide to leave unchanged?**

A: There were certain customer favourites e.g. fish and chips that we didn't want to change, although we were happy to offer alternatives. There were also contract specific products that we had to make available that we could not change. We swapped some of our retail items for lower calorie options, popcorn instead of crisps for example.

**Q: Did your catering teams have any concerns about making changes and were these easy to overcome?**

A: We had to overcome financial and operational challenges throughout the research project. One challenge was getting new products listed and loaded onto our till system so that we could continue to monitor sales.

**Q: What advice would you give to others thinking about introducing healthier products?**

A: Make small changes to start with then introduce more over time.

**Q: How will this work inform what Compass offers in other workplaces?**

A: We're talking about it a lot to clients who are keen to start making small changes and monitor the impact that it has.



# Tony Walton

Sodexo

Sodexo is a service provider that caters for many workplaces. Tony manages some of its key accounts, including Mars where portion sizes were reduced at two workplace restaurants.

**Q: Did you have any initial reservations about reducing portion sizes?**

A: The only reservation regarding the portion sizes was to ensure that the different sizes were reflected in the tariff.

**Q: What kind of products were you able to reduce in size and what were you unable to change?**

A: Meals like chicken curry and rice were easy to reduce in size by using the correct sized serving utensils. It was not as straightforward for all products; we considered offering a smaller breakfast sausage for example, but our supplier didn't offer a smaller version.

**Q: What challenges did you have to overcome?**

A: Some customers noticed changes, but the vast majority of customer comments were positive. Making the tariff reflective of the change was, I believe, key in the success. We also did work in the background to make sure the calorie information provided reflected the new portion sizes.

**Q: Did it take long for your colleagues to get to grips with serving smaller portions?**

A: We trained our colleagues involved with the production and serving of food. Management ensured that the correct production and serving utensils were available and the team coped well with the changes.

**Q: Were you surprised by peoples' reaction to smaller sized portions?**

In most cases the reaction was positive ... I will say again that the tariff does come hand in hand with this and I would suggest that if the tariff remained at a constant price that would lead to issues and would work against the obvious benefits.

**Q: What have been your biggest learning points?**

A: For some of the products, particularly breakfast items, we struggled to source slightly smaller alternatives. This came as a surprise. But we found plenty of ways to reduce the portion size of the foods we prepare ourselves.

**Q: What advice would you give to others thinking about reducing portion sizes?**

A: There are lots of ways to support this and subtle change is sometimes the best solution. We also noticed that the way items are presented can often negate the reduced size of that item.

# Nikki Kirbell

Unilever

Nikki leads on Unilever's employee health and wellbeing programme and played a key role in helping us to get the experiments up and running at two of its sites.



**Q: Why did you and Unilever volunteer to take part in our experiments?**

A: We were keen to be part of the research to expand our understanding of the best ways to make small changes to catering provisions that can have a potentially big impact on employees' health.

**Q: In the lead up to the experiments did you have any reservations about the changes proposed?**

A: Our main concerns were the time impact on our catering teams and how employees would react to the changes, but both were receptive.

**Q: You were already seeking to provide a healthy offer, so when you scrutinised the range for this experiment, how easy was it to find ways to improve this further?**

A: We're fortunate that our catering provision is of a very high standard already, but there is always room for improvement. We worked closely with the catering teams to explain what we were trying to do and work out how we could implement the changes.

**Q: How did your catering provider react?**

A: They were incredibly receptive to the research and were involved throughout the process, delivering the changes and the required information back to the research team. Companies are demanding healthier catering standards as part of their contracts and offering this will help caterers set themselves apart.

**Q: How have your teams reacted to the changes?**

A: The reactions have been positive – our employees are more discerning than ever and want the best options to eat healthily throughout their working day.

**Q: What have been your biggest learning points?**

A: To work closely with your catering provider to ensure you're both aligned in what is possible, attainable and of the highest standard. Having an understanding of the realities of providing catering for large numbers of employees helps!

**Q: What advice would you give to others thinking about ways to encourage healthier eating?**

A: Go for it! Companies have a responsibility to provide the best that they can for their employees and if a workplace is providing the best catering it can, this helps support employees on a healthier journey.

**Q: What plans to do you have to extend healthier eating across the whole Unilever business?**

A: Healthy eating forms part of our Global Wellbeing Framework. We work closely with our site facility management company to provide the best nutrition for our employees. The framework is due for a revision and we will consider the outcomes from this research.

# Your next steps

You can introduce any of the changes recommended in this guide individually, but you will have the greatest impact if you do this as part of a longer-term commitment.

So, here is some advice for running a healthy eating programme in your place of work.

## 1. Get the right people on board

- Ideally, healthy eating should sit as part of a broader health and wellbeing programme, addressing both the physical and mental health needs of your people. Depending on the size of your organisation, you could form a team from various departments to promote workplace wellbeing, share ideas, support each other and get the ball rolling. However, if that's not yet possible, don't let it stop you getting started. You can always build in stages
- Getting senior-level commitment will empower your people to suggest and make changes. So, if you don't have this already, ask one of the leaders in your business to be the sponsor and champion

## 2. Assess your current offering and set some targets

- Use this guide to decide which recommendations could be applied in your employee restaurant
- Set some targets. Make these realistic, you can always set the targets higher over time





### 3. Make a series of changes

- Take a series of steps rather than making lots of changes at once. This way, you can see what does and doesn't work well and you can backtrack on some changes if necessary
- If you have more than one staff restaurant in your organisation, you don't need to adopt a "one size fits all" rule. You can apply the same underlying principles but be guided by differences in customer demand at each site
- You can complement your changes by offering education to your people about healthy balanced diets. See *Further information* for other resources you may find useful
- Remember, that as well as satisfying nutritional needs, food and drink brings enjoyment and a sense of reward after a hard session at work. So bear this in mind when you are making changes and don't be too much of a purist

### 4. Measure your impact

- Consider how to measure the impact of your programme, for example through sales of healthier meals and colleague satisfaction. It will take a while for dietary changes to have an impact on overall health so give it enough time
- Morale is a vital factor in any wellbeing programme so ask your colleagues for their opinions, take the feedback on board and be prepared to adapt your approach without sacrificing your end goal

### 5. Keep up to date

- Keep up to date with the latest developments on healthy eating in the workplace and update your policy as needed
- You can register to receive our free newsletter for the latest Healthy Eating programme developments and free resources at:

**[www.igd.com/healthyeating](http://www.igd.com/healthyeating)**



# Further information

## Other IGD resources you may find useful

How to help people understand front-of-pack nutrition labels:

[igd.com/healthyeating](https://igd.com/healthyeating)

Visit IGD's reformulation hub for tools, tips and guidance on making products healthier:

[igd.com/healthyeating](https://igd.com/healthyeating)

Calculating and communicating fruit and vegetable portions in composite foods:

[igd.com/charitable-impact/healthy-eating/voluntary-guidance](https://igd.com/charitable-impact/healthy-eating/voluntary-guidance)

## For further inspiration

For guidance and public health campaigns from Public Health England, including 'The Eatwell Guide', 'One You' and 'Government Buying Standards for food and catering services':

[gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england](https://gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england)

Nutrition Guide for Catering Managers and Chefs, UK Hospitality (formerly British Hospitality Association):

[ukhospitality.org.uk](https://ukhospitality.org.uk)

Physical activity, diet and weight management: a toolkit for employers, Business in the Community/ Public Health England:

[wellbeing.bitc.org.uk/sites/default/files/business\\_in\\_the\\_community\\_physical\\_activity\\_healthier\\_eating\\_healthier\\_weight\\_toolkit.pdf](https://wellbeing.bitc.org.uk/sites/default/files/business_in_the_community_physical_activity_healthier_eating_healthier_weight_toolkit.pdf)

For EU Nutrition and Health Claims, see Europa:

[ec.europa.eu/food/safety](https://ec.europa.eu/food/safety)

For nutrition information on food and drink consumed in the UK, see McCance and Widdowson's Composition of Foods Integrated Dataset:

[gov.uk/government/publications/composition-of-foods-integrated-dataset-cofid](https://gov.uk/government/publications/composition-of-foods-integrated-dataset-cofid)

Find a registered nutritionist, Association for Nutrition:

[associationfornutrition.org](https://associationfornutrition.org)

Find a registered dietitian, British Dietetic Association:

[freelancedietitians.org](https://freelancedietitians.org)



## References

### Our experiment results

Pechey R, Cartwright E, Pilling M, Hollands GJ, Jebb SA, Vasiljevic M, Marteau TM. **Impact of increasing the proportion of healthier foods available on energy purchased in worksite cafeterias: A stepped wedge randomized controlled pilot trial** *under review*

Hollands GJ, Cartwright E, Pilling M, Pechey R, Vasiljevic M, Jebb SA, et al. (2018). **Impact of reducing portion sizes in worksite cafeterias: a stepped wedge randomised controlled pilot trial.** *Int J Behav Nutr Phy.* 2018;15(1):78; 10.1186/s12966-018-0705-1

Vasiljevic M, Cartwright E, Pilling M, Lee MM, Bignardi G, Pechey R, Hollands GJ, Jebb SA, Marteau TM. (2018) **Impact of calorie labelling in worksite cafeterias: a stepped wedge randomised controlled pilot trial.** *Int J Behav Nutr Phy;* 15(1):41; 10.1186/s12966-018-0671-7

Underpinning our advice, this research has been rigorously scrutinised by an independent panel of expert scientists in a process called peer review. Our research will be published in open access peer-reviewed journals.

### Statistical significance

Calories purchased will always fluctuate in a restaurant, even when no specific changes are introduced. It was important to understand whether the changes we saw were because of our interventions or for other reasons.

The standard test for statistical significance is the 95% confidence limit. This was passed by our experiments to offer a balanced choice whereas reducing portions fell slightly short; although we believe the evidence is strong enough to act upon. Providing calorie information passed the significance test at only one site although it was widely popular.

### Cochrane library

Hollands GJ, Carter P, Shermilt I, Marteau TM, Jebb SA, Higgins J, Ogilvie D. **Altering the availability or proximity of food, alcohol and tobacco products to change their selection and consumption.** *Cochrane Database of Syst Rev.* 2017

Hollands GJ, Shemilt I, Marteau TM, Jebb SA, Lewis HB, Wei Y, Higgins J, Ogilvie D. **Portion, package or tableware size for changing selection and consumption of food, alcohol and tobacco.** *Cochrane Database Syst Rev.* 2015

Crockett RA, King SE, Marteau TM, Prevost AT, Bignardi G, Roberts NW, Stubbs B, Hollands GJ, Jebb SA. **Nutritional labelling for healthier food or non-alcoholic drink purchasing and consumption.** *Cochrane Database Syst Rev.* 2018

Cochrane is an independent network of experts that review and summarise the best available evidence from existing research. A review of existing scientific literature provided the rationale for testing what we did.



# Our advisory group

IGD has been advised by an expert group, including nutritionists, catering companies and chefs, wellbeing specialists and communication professionals.

Members acted as ambassadors for healthier eating at work and played a key role in helping to get the experiments up and running.

Our research partner, the BHRU conducted its research independently. Advisory group members did not play a role in the study design, analysis or interpretation of results.

Thank you to the volunteer worksites, our advisory group members and research partner for their contribution to this guide.

## Members

- Allied Bakeries
- Arla Foods UK
- BaxterStorey Limited
- Brakes
- Coca-Cola European Partners
- Compass Group PLC
- Elior UK
- Gather and Gather
- John Lewis Partnership
- Marks and Spencer plc
- Mars Wrigley Confectionary UK
- McCurrach UK Ltd
- Nestle UK Ltd
- Premier Foods Group Plc
- Sainsbury's
- Sodexo Ltd
- Tesco Stores Ltd
- The Good Eating Company
- Unilever UK Ltd
- Wm Morrison Supermarkets PLC



# Want to know more?



IGD is a research and training charity which sits at the heart of the food and grocery industry. It has a trading subsidiary that provides commercial services. The profits from these commercial services fund the charity.

Our Healthy Eating programme brings people together to promote healthier diets in the UK through research, insight and recommendations.

To access our free online resources and sign up to our newsletter, please visit:

**[igd.com/healthyeating](https://igd.com/healthyeating)**  
or email **[healthyeating@igd.com](mailto:healthyeating@igd.com)**



The BHRU contributes evidence to national and international efforts to achieve sustained behaviour change to improve health outcomes and reduce health inequalities.

The main focus of their work is on developing effective ways of changing four sets of behaviour - smoking, excessive consumption of food and alcohol, and physical inactivity. Changing these behaviours positively would help prevent the majority of the preventable non-communicable diseases, including many cancers, cardiovascular disease and diabetes.

The BHRU is based at the University of Cambridge.

To find out more, please visit:

**[bhru.iph.cam.ac.uk](https://bhru.iph.cam.ac.uk)**



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[www.igd.com](http://www.igd.com)

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