

Here are some frequently asked questions about the interpretation and implementation of the Healthy Choices guidelines.

## What are the Healthy Choices guidelines?

The Victorian Government has developed the Healthy Choices guidelines to support the provision and promotion of healthy foods and drinks in places like hospitals and health services, workplaces, universities and sports and recreation facilities. The guidelines aim to promote healthy foods and drinks in retail outlets, vending machines and catering. They use a traffic light system to classify foods and drinks as **GREEN** (best choices), **AMBER** (choose carefully) or **RED** (limit).

The guidelines recommend that retail outlets and vending machines provide at least 50% **GREEN** items and less than 20% **RED** options. The guidelines also recommend that catering provided to staff in an organisation should only be **GREEN** or **AMBER** foods and drinks.

For more information on the targets refer to the [Healthy Choices guidelines](#) page on our website.

## Why implement Healthy Choices guidelines?

Your organisation can make a big difference when it comes to healthy eating!

Whether you are a smaller organisation providing catering at meetings and events, or a larger organisation with vending machines or even a retail outlet, you can help staff and visitors to be healthier and happier.

By offering foods and drinks that follow the Healthy Choices guidelines, you can help improve wellbeing for your staff and visitors and promote your organisation as a healthy eating leader in your industry.

The following are some reasons to implement the Healthy Choices guidelines in your organisation:

### For hospitals and health services

“Better health through prevention” is a key focus of the Victorian Government’s *Health 2040: Advancing health, access and care* policy.

Adopting the Healthy Choices guidelines and supplying healthier foods and drinks for staff and guests is a measureable action that will fit into your health service’s *Statement of Priorities* to support healthy populations through prevention.

By providing healthy foods and drinks, your health service will:

- communicate consistent messages about healthy eating and healthy lifestyles to the community

The Healthy Choices guidelines aim to promote healthy foods and drinks in retail outlets, vending machines and catering.

- have a food service which aligns with the health messages of the organisation
- meet community expectations about promoting healthy lifestyles.

### For sport and recreation centres

Healthy eating is just as important as physical activity in creating a healthy lifestyle.

Supplying healthier foods and drinks in food outlets, vending machines and catering in your sport and recreation centre provides a consistent message about healthy lifestyles to the children and adults that visit your centre.

It can also attract more visitors by creating a family-friendly environment, and have the potential to increase revenue due to health conscious visitors purchasing healthier choices.

### For all workplaces

Healthy employees are productive employees, and the foods and drinks that your staff consume each day affect their energy levels, mood and concentration, not to mention their long term health.

Supplying healthier foods and drinks through catering, vending machines and on site food outlets will ensure your staff and visitors have access to nutritious options that support optimal performance and overall health.

It can also contribute to:

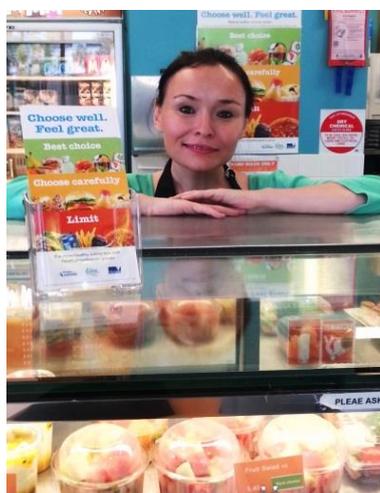
- staff being more productive and satisfied in their work
- less stress and anxiety in the workplace
- staff having fewer 'absent' or sick days.

### What support is available to assist me to implement the guidelines?

The Healthy Eating Advisory Service (HEAS) is a government funded service delivered by Nutrition Australia Vic Division that supports organisations to provide and promote healthier foods and drinks through catering, retail food outlets and vending.

The HEAS can support you through the following free services:

- [online training](#) on the Healthy Choices guidelines for retail outlet managers, front of house staff, cooks and chefs.
- [face-to-face training](#) about the Healthy Choices guidelines. This also provides an opportunity to network with others implementing Healthy Choices.
- online [Healthy vending assessments](#) to assess the foods and drinks sold in vending machines against the Healthy Choices guidelines.
- [case studies](#) that illustrate how other organisations have implemented Healthy Choices, and top tips on how you can too.
- [mentorship training](#) for health professionals to support other organisations to implement the Healthy Choices guidelines.
- an online menu, product and recipe assessment tool (will be available in 2017), to check retail outlet and catering menus against the Healthy Choices guidelines, and find healthier products.
- telephone and email support to answer any questions about implementing the Healthy Choices guidelines, classifying foods and drinks, and sourcing healthier food and drink options.



For more information about how the Healthy Eating Advisory Service can help you visit [www.heas.health.vic.gov.au](http://www.heas.health.vic.gov.au).

Without management support it can be difficult to create sustained change.



Suppliers are always keen for the next contract and so will try to meet your needs with regards to healthy foods as best they can.

## Where can I start? What's the first thing I should do?

Head to the [Getting started](#) page for advice on how to start implementing the Healthy Choices guidelines in your organisation.

One of the first steps is to get support from management (see below). Have a look at our [case studies](#) to get some ideas for building the business case with leaders.

Another easy step is to register for the [Achievement Program](#). This program, run by the Cancer Council Victoria, provides a free evidence-based framework to create a healthy environment that supports the health and wellbeing of everyone in your organisation. Once you register with the Achievement Program, you can access their online portal for a range of tools and resources, and receive the support you need along the way.

## How do I get leadership and management on board?

Getting your organisation's management on board with Healthy Choices is important as they can help to lead and advocate for healthy eating, and make changes at a policy level. Without management support it can be difficult to create sustained change. Some ideas to ensure your leadership team is supportive are:

- Present to your executive and your management team the benefits to the organisation and the benefits to staff and visitors by using the statistics found in the Healthier food outlet benefits [fact sheet](#).
- Use key messages from the [Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2015-2019](#), for example "Dietary risks are the largest cause of disease burden in Australia", and "10.5% of Australia's total burden of disease is due to dietary risks".
- Undertake a brief baseline assessment of some or all of your retail, vending and catering facilities and compare these to the Healthy Choices guidelines – even just the drink display. This data can be presented to your executive to show how you compare to other organisations.
- Refer to the work done by [Alfred Health](#). Their online case study shows how they removed sugar sweetened beverages (classified **RED**) from view yet their sales remained steady, and the purchasing of **GREEN** and **AMBER** drinks increased. Their [infographic](#) can be particularly helpful.
- Refer to the Healthy Eating Advisory Service website for more [case studies](#).

## What if I have existing contracts with vending suppliers?

It is important to know where the contract stands with your vending suppliers.

**If a contract is up for renewal or tender**, consider including a clause around requiring suppliers to provide vending machines that meet the Healthy Choices guidelines. If up for tender, look at influencing the tender deliverables by working with your procurement department. Go to the [Organisational Policy](#) page for some service agreement templates and examples to use.

**If you have existing contracts with vending suppliers**, ask them if they have healthier options they could provide. Suppliers are always keen for the next contract and so will try to meet your needs with regards to healthy foods as best they can.

Many vending suppliers are receiving such requests, and if the demand is increasing then more vending suppliers will see the benefit in introducing healthier foods and drinks.

You may be eligible for the Healthy Choices marketing material to display around the food outlet, on vending machines, or at catered events.



Find more information on our [Healthy vending](#) page or some healthy options on our [Healthy vending ideas](#) page.

### How do I source healthier foods and drinks?

Have a look at some of our webpages for ideas of healthier food or drink options and how to source them:

- [Simple changes for healthier catering](#)
- [Simple changes for healthier foods and drinks](#)
- [Healthy vending plan-o-grams](#)

[Contact](#) the Healthy Eating Advisory Service for more assistance.

### How can I promote to my staff and the public that we are working towards the Healthy Choices guidelines?

There are many ways to promote the excellent work you're doing by working towards the Healthy Choices guidelines.

- Give staff an opportunity to be involved in the change. They may be able to lead some elements through the Staff Health and Wellbeing Committee
- Use your organisation's social media platforms to make announcements and provide updates.
- Write an article or a news alert explaining what you're doing. You could also include it in the staff daily bulletin where relevant.
- Use our [Healthy Choices marketing material](#) to communicate the guidelines and the traffic light system in retail food outlets, on vending machines or at catered events. The materials are available to eligible organisations that have met certain criteria. If you're not yet eligible for the Healthy Choices marketing material there are other [resources](#) to promote your work.
- You could even create your own display materials to show what you are doing at the moment, for instance removing sugar sweetened beverages, or reviewing the vending machines.

### Can catering companies have **RED** foods and drinks?

Yes they can.

For a **caterer** the Healthy Choices guidelines recommend that:

- at least 50% of foods and drinks they offer should be from the **GREEN** category
- no more than 20% of foods and drinks they offer should be from the **RED** category
- **RED** foods and drinks should not be promoted or prominently displayed

For a **workplace** wishing to implement healthy catering, they must only:

- purchase foods and drinks from a caterer's menu that are in the **GREEN** and **AMBER** categories
- provide themselves, or make on site, catering that is in line with the [Healthy Choices: Healthy Eating Policy and Catering Guide for Workplaces](#)

Visit the [Healthy Choices](#) or the [Caterers](#) section of the HEAS website for more information.

## How does the Health Star Rating relate to the Victorian government's Healthy Choices guidelines?

The Health Star Rating is a federal government supported labelling system on packaged food and drinks to help consumers choose healthier versions of similar packaged products. For example, to compare one breakfast cereal with another, or one muesli bar with another.

The Health Star Rating does not replace the Victorian government traffic light system used in the Healthy Choices guidelines. The Healthy Choices guidelines are a broader resource that take into account not only packaged products, but all five core food groups, fresh foods, portion sizes, and display and promotion.

Visit the [Healthy Choices guidelines](#) section of the HEAS website for more information, or refer to the [Health Star Rating](#) website.