



MunchCODE 
PICK THE RIGHT SNACKS & *color* YOURSELF HEALTHY

Healthy Concessions Munch Code

The Healthy Concessions Munch Code guidelines was developed by the Choteau Change Club in cooperation with the Healthy SD Program of the South Dakota Department of Health to assist local communities in improving the concession stand “nutrition environment” to promote healthy eating among youth and families in our county.

The Choteau Change Club is a grassroots organization that is a part of a nationwide effort to promote small changes in nutrition and exercise habits that will lead to healthier communities. National fitness and nutrition researcher Miriam Nelson, Ph.D., Tufts University, visited Choteau in the fall of 2011 and led a two-day program for community members to learn about national health and fitness challenges. In coordination with the Montana State Extension Service, Nelson’s staff led participants through a learning process that culminated with the formation of the Change Club, a group that is committed to helping give our community healthier options.

The Change Club’s noble purpose is to positively shift the food culture in Choteau by improving food offered at public and community gatherings. Why is this important? In today’s busy world, many of us eat meals and snacks away from home while enjoying physical activity or supporting youth sports or other extracurricular activities. Improved concession stand offerings will provide healthier choices for our community. Too often, the foods and drinks commonly sold at concession stands are high in sugar, fat and calories. However, research has demonstrated that students (and their parents) will buy and eat healthy foods and drinks when they are available, convenient and affordable.

If you are a contracted concessionaire, a coach, a civic volunteer, an involved parent, or a person who provides food at public gatherings, or you operate a concession stand seasonally or even once a year, you will find a variety of tools in these guidelines to help improve your food and beverage offerings. You’ll find the information you need to make your concessions stand a healthier one, and to contribute to making your community healthier in the process.



Adopt The Munch Code!

Approximately two-thirds of the United States population is either overweight (35%) or obese (>30%) putting people at risk for serious health issues such as diabetes, heart disease and high blood pressure.^{1,7} In many situations, the default “choice” for nourishment is quite often no choice at all.

For example, foods and beverages offered at sporting events where we celebrate physical activity and athletic ability are often high in sugar, fat and calories.^{2,6} Isn't it ironic that as athletes reach for their personal bests, the surrounding spectators consume unhealthy foods and diminish their vitality? How do we expect to properly nourish the bodies and the minds of our next champions given this disparity?



Fortunately, people will buy and eat healthy items when they are tasty, convenient and affordable.^{1,2,6} Improving the concession stand food culture enables people to make a healthy choice and creates social support for healthier lifestyles.^{1,2} Some simple, healthy additions to the standard concession stand fare include: fresh whole fruits such as apples, nuts such as almonds and low-fat string cheese.²

In addition to making healthy, nutrient-dense foods available at concession stands, it is also important to give people guidance in how to differentiate healthy and unhealthy items. The Munch Code offers a variety of tools to help you:

1. *Improve the offerings at your local concession stand;*
2. *Highlight healthier items; and*
3. *Mobilize support in your community.*

Adopting a color-coded approach to concession items is an effective way to highlight healthy options.^{5,10} The Munch Code applies green-yellow-red traffic light colors to individual food and beverage items and is an easy way to convey nutritive value.

★ **Green = Go**

Indicates the healthiest options. *Eat a Bunch!*

★ **Yellow = Yield**

Indicates items with added sugar, fat and calories. *Just a Little!*

★ **Red = Stop**

Indicates items that are high in sugar, fat and calories. *Not so Much!*



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The following guidelines which are by no means inclusive, classify concession items into one of the three Munch Code color categories.²

Green = Go!

Eat a Bunch!

Green foods/beverages are the healthiest options and may be enjoyed often. These are the foods that will really fuel you to go! Full speed ahead when choosing these items.

Yellow = Yield!

Just a Little!

Yellow foods/beverages have added sugar, fat and calories and may be consumed in moderation. Yield! Use caution before choosing these items.

Red = Stop!

Not so Much!




Red foods/beverages are the least healthy (highest in sugar, fat and calories) and may be eaten sparingly. Stop and think before choosing these items.




Ideally, most **(60-100%)** of the concessions items should be Green, some **(30% or less)** should be Yellow and very few **(10% or less)** should be Red.⁴

Aim for single-serving portion sizes for all items, striving for less than or equal to 200 calories per portion. Also, be sure and follow all proper food safety, handling and preparation guidelines, especially in regard to meats, hot foods and peanuts.





Green = Go	Yellow = Yield	Red = Stop	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh, whole fruit (apples, oranges, bananas, etc.) • Frozen grapes • Unsweetened applesauce • Fruit cups canned in own juice • Dried fruits, no added sugar • (raisins, cranberries, apricots) • Packaged slices of fresh fruit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low-sugar, mostly fruit, • Fruit leathers • Fruits canned in syrup • Dried fruits, sugar added • Sweetened applesauce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fruit snacks/fruit bites • Candy or sugar-coated dried fruit • Yogurt-covered raisins 	 <p>Fruit</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single-serving bags of carrots or other vegetables (can sell in combination with hummus or nut butter) • Cups of cut, mixed vegetables (can sell in combination with hummus or nut butter) • Fresh garden salads with low-fat dressing • Baked potatoes with veggie toppings, low-fat cheese • Corn on the cob • Baked sweet potato fries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chef salads • Large dill pickles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Battered, fried vegetables • French fries • Onion rings • Sweet potato fries 	 <p>Vegetables</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low-fat string cheese • Low-fat cottage cheese • Low-fat hard cheeses • Low-fat, low-sugar yogurts and tubes • Low-sugar, fat-free pudding cups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular yogurt • Regular yogurt tubes • Regular cheese • Pudding cups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nacho cheese sauce • Battered, fried cheese products 	 <p>Dairy</p>

	Green = Go	Yellow = Yield	Red = Stop
Nuts, Seeds, Legumes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single-serve packaged nuts • Plain trail mix • Sunflower seeds • Pumpkin seeds • Single-serve hummus • Single-serve peanut butter • Freeze-dried legumes (peas, chickpeas) • Edamame (soybeans) • Plain almonds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corn Nuts <p><i>*Follow all proper food safety and handling guidelines, especially in regard to peanut products and allergy issues. *Choose low-sodium options for green items</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sugar-coated nuts • Yogurt-covered nuts • Trail mix with chocolate, yogurt-coated pieces or candy
Frozen Foods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% frozen fruit juice bars • 100% frozen fruit products with no added sugar • Low-fat frozen yogurt • All-fruit smoothies, sorbets, and slushes • Frozen grapes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sorbet • Low-fat ice cream products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Popsicles • Fudgcicles • Snow-cones • Slushes/Icees • Regular ice cream products
Meats and Hot Foods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low-fat hot dogs • Cheese pizza • Veggie pizza • Veggie burgers • 95% lean hamburgers, turkey burgers, buffalo burgers • 95% fat-free jerky • Tanka Bars (buffalo, cranberries) • Low-fat chili • Walking tacos with 95% lean meat, baked tortilla chips, low-fat cheese • Taco burgers, 95% lean beef • Sloppy Joes, BBQ's, 95% lean beef • Broth-based soups: vegetable, noodle, chicken noodle, tomato • Wraps made with lean meat, veggies, and whole wheat tortilla 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turkey corn dogs • Cream-based soups <p><i>*Follow all proper food safety, handling, and preparation guidelines *Choose low-sodium and whole-grain options for green items</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular hot dogs • Regular corn dogs • Regular, meat/sausage pizza • Chicken nuggets • Slim Jims • Jerky • Pork rinds • Sausage • Chili cheese sauce • Vienna sausages



Green = Go

- Plain, non-carbonated bottled water without flavoring or additives
- 100% fruit juice
- 100% vegetable juice, low sodium
- Non-fat plain milk
- Low-fat plain milk
- Unsweetened hot or cold tea (black, green, herbal)
- 100% hot apple cider
- Milk alternatives – soy, almond, rice milk, no added sugar
- Coffee

Yellow = Yield

- Low-sugar or low-calorie sports drinks
- Zero-calorie sports drinks
- Low-calorie flavored water
- Diet soda
- Seltzer water
- Club soda
- Sugar-free hot cocoa
- 2% milk

Red = Stop

- Regular soda
- Regular sports drinks
- Fruit drinks
- Sweetened teas, lemonades
- Flavored milk (chocolate, strawberry)
- Flavored milk alternatives
- Whole milk
- Regular hot cocoa
- Sweetened coffee drinks



Beverages

- Whole-grain baked chips, pretzels, soy crisps, pita chips and crackers
- Animal crackers
- Graham crackers
- Cereal
- Low-fat and low-sugar sports bars and granola bars
- Plain, fat-free air popped popcorn
- Plain rice cakes
- Low-sugar oatmeal or other hot cereal
- Buns, bagels, tortillas
- Fruit/fig bars
- Goldfish pretzels
- Muffins, waffles, pancakes
- Noodles, not fried
- Gluten-free pretzels

- Regular granola bars
- Cereal bars
- Light popcorn
- Low-fat cookies
- Large soft pretzels
- White breads, pitas, tortillas
- Taco shells
- Goldfish crackers
- Cereal bowls
- Waffles
- Pancakes
- Breadsticks
- Noodles, not fried

**Choose whole-grain options for green items*

- Regular chips
- Regular, buttered popcorn
- Cookies
- Toaster pastries
- Packaged muffins
- Doughnuts, croissants, danishes
- Marshmallow cereal treats
- Packaged snack cakes
- 'Puppy Chow' made with cereal
- Cakes
- Cupcakes
- Toaster waffles
- Cinnamon rolls
- Ramen noodles
- Cracker sandwiches (cheese, peanut butter)



Grains

- Hard-cooked eggs
- Low-sodium salsa
- Mustard
- Fat-free, low-fat dressings and dips
- Marinara dipping sauce
- Hummus

- Sugar-free gelatin
- Sugar-free caramel dip
- Low-fat caramel dip

- Candy
- Cotton candy
- Gelatin cups
- Full-fat dressings and dips
- Regular mayonnaise
- Regular sour cream
- Nacho cheese sauce
- Butter, margarine



Other

Nutrition Standards And Healthy Concessions: Reach For The Stars!



Although items listed as Green or Yellow represent much healthier alternatives to typical concessions offerings, they may or may not necessarily meet the Institute of Medicine (IOM) nutrition standards.^{2,7} This accommodates portion-size differences that may be encountered in pre-packaged foods and gives you some flexibility in your concession environment.

Read nutrition labels and be aware of the IOM standards as you evaluate serving size, fat content, sugar content and sodium content of your concession items. Many beverages and packaged products include more than a single serving, which greatly increases caloric content.²

Strive to offer the healthiest choices possible... Reach for the stars!

2007 IOM Nutrition Standards for Foods in Schools⁷

Foods

- ≤ 200 calories per portion as packaged
- No more than 35 percent of total calories from fat
- < 10 percent of total calories from saturated fat
- Zero trans fat (less than or equal to 0.5 grams per serving)
- ≤ 35 percent of calories from total sugars, except for yogurt with no more than 30 grams of total sugars per 8-ounce portion as packaged
- Sodium content of 200 milligrams or less per portion as packaged

Beverages

- Water without flavoring, additives, or carbonation
- Low-fat (1%) and nonfat milk in 8-ounce portion
- Includes lactose-free and soy beverages
- Includes flavored milk with no more than 22 grams of total sugars per 8-ounce portion
- 100% fruit juice in 4-ounce portion as packaged for elementary/ middle school and 8-ounce portion for high school
- Caffeine-free, with the exception of trace amounts of naturally occurring caffeine substances.



Keys To Success



Placement



Promotion



Pricing

Set yourself up for success by using these proven strategies for increasing sales of healthy items.^{9,10} Make it easy for people to identify and choose healthier items with product placement, creative promotion and reasonable pricing.

Placement^{9,10}

Place healthy items and/or pictures of these items at eye-level for children and adults.

Promotion^{9,10}

Use signs, posters, table tents and colors of the Munch Code to highlight healthier items. Inform your customers about the relative healthiness of the available choices with the Munch Code, which uses traffic light colors to convey relative nutritional value. Green, yellow and red stickers can either be applied to item lists or to the items themselves, or perhaps distributed with product purchases.



*Pricing*⁹

Seal the deal by setting prices for healthy items the same as or lower than less healthy options.

Barrier Busters

Adding healthy food items to concession stands creates an opportunity for choice and supports healthy lifestyles. However, many people resist change, even though it is a constant part of life. Should your attempt to positively shift the food culture in your community hit a barrier, you may find a solution among the following strategies.²

Barrier	Strategy
Lack of access to healthier items ²	<p>Partner with local grocers, regional food wholesalers and request healthier items.²</p> <p>Gain purchasing power by working with other groups in your community that may also operate concession stands and purchase in bulk.²</p> <p>The more requests vendors get for healthier items, the more likely they will begin to carry those items.²</p>
Facilities and storage inadequate for fresh fruits/vegetables, or other perishable healthy foods ²	<p>Consider working with vendors who allow you to return unsold perishable items.²</p>
Profitability concerns ²	<p>Research shows that serving healthier foods/beverages can still be profitable.^{6,10} Several studies have shown and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) agree, that children will purchase healthful options and that schools and other organizations can increase their profit margins even when healthy food and beverage options are the only options available.⁴</p> <p>Employing various pricing and placement strategies can increase sales of the healthier items. Use of the supporting marketing materials can enhance sales of the healthier foods/beverages.^{9,10}</p>
Constant turnover of staff, volunteers, parents who operate concession stand make it difficult to try new things ²	<p>Sharing and posting these guidelines along with using the marketing and messaging materials will help educate your concessions staff.²</p> <p>Gaining support from your organization’s leaders, respected community champions, or local sports figures will help in institutionalizing the guidelines.²</p> <p>Identify the health champions within your organization to help educate and encourage others.²</p>
Concerns with existing soft drink sponsors/sports marketing contracts ²	<p>Start the conversation within your organization and bring the beverage industry/sponsors to the table. The shift in focus to health and wellness for kids (and adults) is now attracting the attention of many retail marketers.⁴</p> <p>Many beverage vendors now have healthier alternatives in their product lines and should be willing to work with you to offer healthier products for your youth and families. Express your desire to improve the health of your community and to keep them as partners in this effort.²</p>



Every Journey Begins With The First Step

Here are some action items to help you get started in offering healthier foods and beverages in your concession stand.

- Bring your local concession stand decision makers, health/policy champions, parent volunteers and others together to read and discuss these guidelines.
- Discuss goals of organization, current concession stand offerings, budget, staffing and barriers/solutions to offering healthier foods and beverages.
- Determine what changes you can make right now in offering healthier foods and beverages. Assign tasks and dates for completion.
- Use the Munch Code! Apply green, yellow and red stickers to food and beverage lists or perhaps to the items themselves. Involve youth representatives in making posters that people can use to differentiate unhealthy items from healthy “green means go” items.
- Determine what changes you will make in the future in offering healthier foods and beverages – assign tasks and dates for completion.
- Evaluate at the end of each season or year and if need be, refine your healthy options.
- Enlist other community members to support your efforts to offer healthier foods and beverages, such as city leaders, media, local athletes, youth representatives, youth organizations and local grocery/food industry partners. Share the guidelines with them and outline your plan for long-term improvement of your concession stand.
- Communicate your new healthy concessions goals to others, incorporate marketing materials and plan a kick-off to unveil your new and improved concession stand.



Thank you for bringing healthier foods and beverages to your concession stand and for improving the health of your community!

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