

Smart Choices

A. Healthy Eating

Working with the Canteen Service

Veterans Canteen Service (VCS) is currently repackaging its healthy eating program, Wise Up. The new program, Smart Choices, will expand the Wise Up concept to provide more readily available nutrition information and a wider variety of healthful food choices. The Smart Choices program will continue to offer a daily meal (in large canteens) on the Country Cooking hot food line that will provide no more than 500 calories, 35 percent total calories from fat, 100 milligrams (mg) of cholesterol, and 800 mg sodium. Smaller canteens may only offer Smart Choice meals twice a week. Smart Choices in the pizza shops include the cheese and vegetarian pizza (on whole wheat crust). A variety of half deli sandwiches containing less than 300 calories are also available. Wise Up (Smart Choices) labels can also be seen in vending machines for items that are lower in fat, cholesterol, and total calories, such as baked chips.

VCS prepares all foods with trans fat-free oils, spreads, and margarines and offers low-fat or fat-free mayonnaise and dressings. Future initiatives include offering a variety of whole grain breads, buns, and rolls, and offering Smart Choice specials in different shops at value pricing.

Additionally, VCS has often supported healthy living items in their retail stores by marking a section with the MOVEmployee! logo or other recognizable campaigns. Items such as pedometers, workout clothes, yoga mats, kitchen scales, or reusable water bottles are examples of items that have been available in the past to support the healthy guidelines we encourage.

The VCS has also been a partner in the nationwide Champions Challenge contest that encourages meeting the physical fitness recommendations of at least 150 minutes of moderate activity each week. The challenge also incorporates suggestions for healthy eating choices, specifically encouraging people trying to lose weight to reduce their intake by 100 calories a day. VCS works with their vendors to offer prizes and incentives throughout the challenge.

Additionally, VCS has quarterly healthy eating newsletters available to provide reinforcement in educating customers. Local Canteen Chiefs are often able to work with local campaigns depending on the request. It is important to communicate with the local representatives to see how employee health promotion and VCS can work to support each other. Encouraging employees to purchase healthy items builds credibility for offering more of these items in the food and retail stores.

B. Program Limitation**C.**

When giving nutritional guidance, it is important to remember that certain medical conditions or diseases require very specific diets that might not follow the general healthy eating guidelines that are outlined in Chapter 9, Healthy Eating. If confronted with individualized nutrition questions, it is important to remember that employee health promotion programs are not intended to provide clinical guidance, since often we do not know someone's full medical history, nor do we serve as the healthcare provider for employees. Employees can be referred to a specialist; specifically, a Registered Dietitian is the credential they should seek. Their primary care provider may be able to refer the employee, or they can search for a Registered Dietitian in their area through the American Dietetic Association's Web site, www.eatright.org. Public health departments also have credible sources for those meeting certain criteria.

