

7 Ways to Bring Nutrition to Your Team

Your Guide
to a Healthier,
Happier Workplace

in partnership with



Fuel your team, fuel your business

As employers, we want our team to be happy and healthy. We also want them to be focused, productive and present. But think about this: Cars don't run on empty. So why should your team? If you want to maximize their output, you need to start with their input—what they're putting in their bodies, that is. That's why a focus on nutrition in the workplace is essential to the success of your business.

Not sure where to begin? We've created this handy guide for employers who want to bring nutrition to work.

We'll cover:

- Why nutrition is important for your team and your business
- 7 ways you can easily bring nutrition to your office
- The best ways to implement a nutrition program
- How League can help you make your team healthier



“Employees with poor nutritional balance reported **21%** more sick-related absence and **11%** lower productivity than healthier colleagues.”

- Personnel Today

“Food has a **direct impact** on cognitive performance.”

- Harvard Business Review

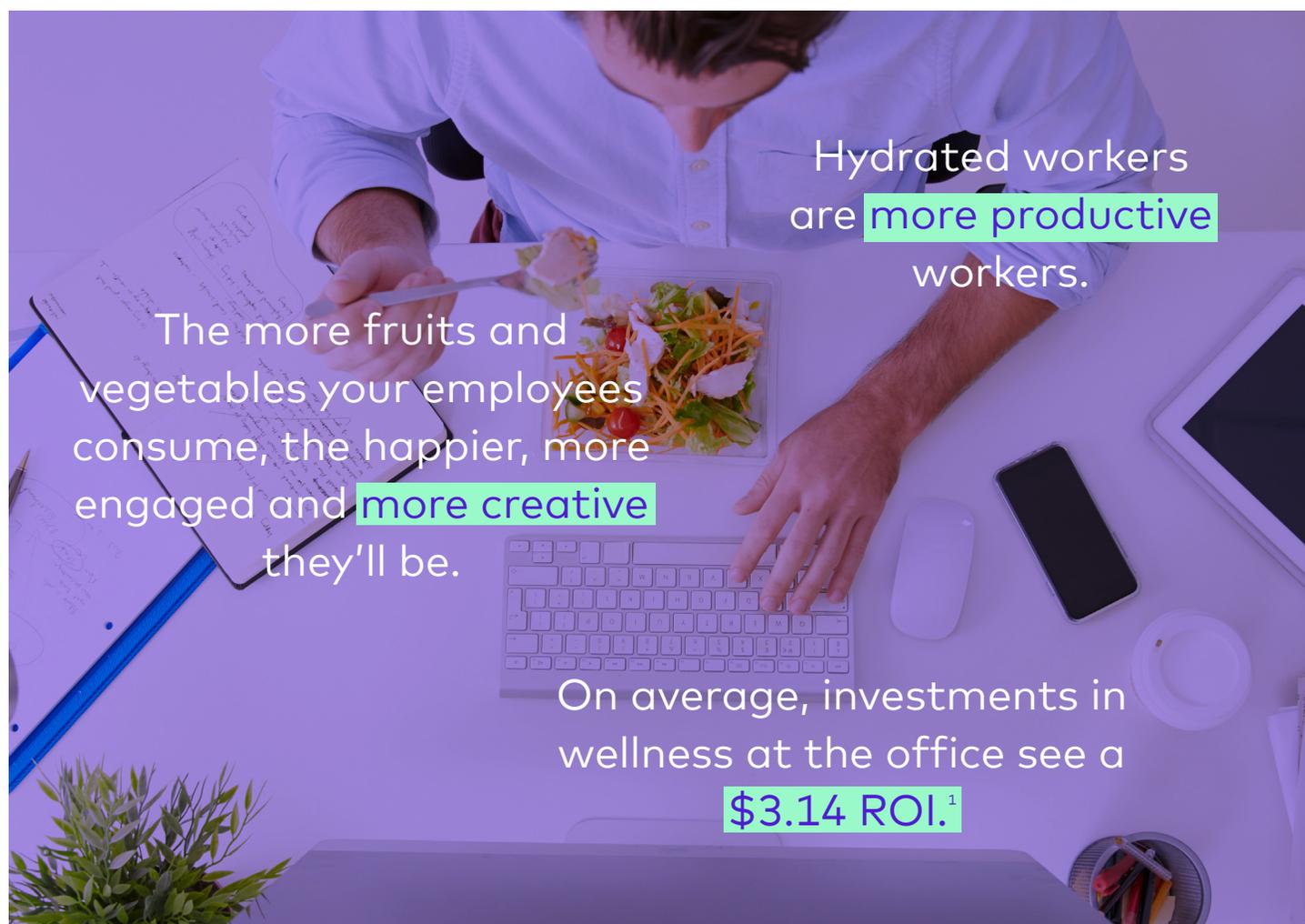
“A nutrient-poor diet can also **impede** your body's ability to **combat stress**.”

- Globe & Mail

This is your chance to make an impact

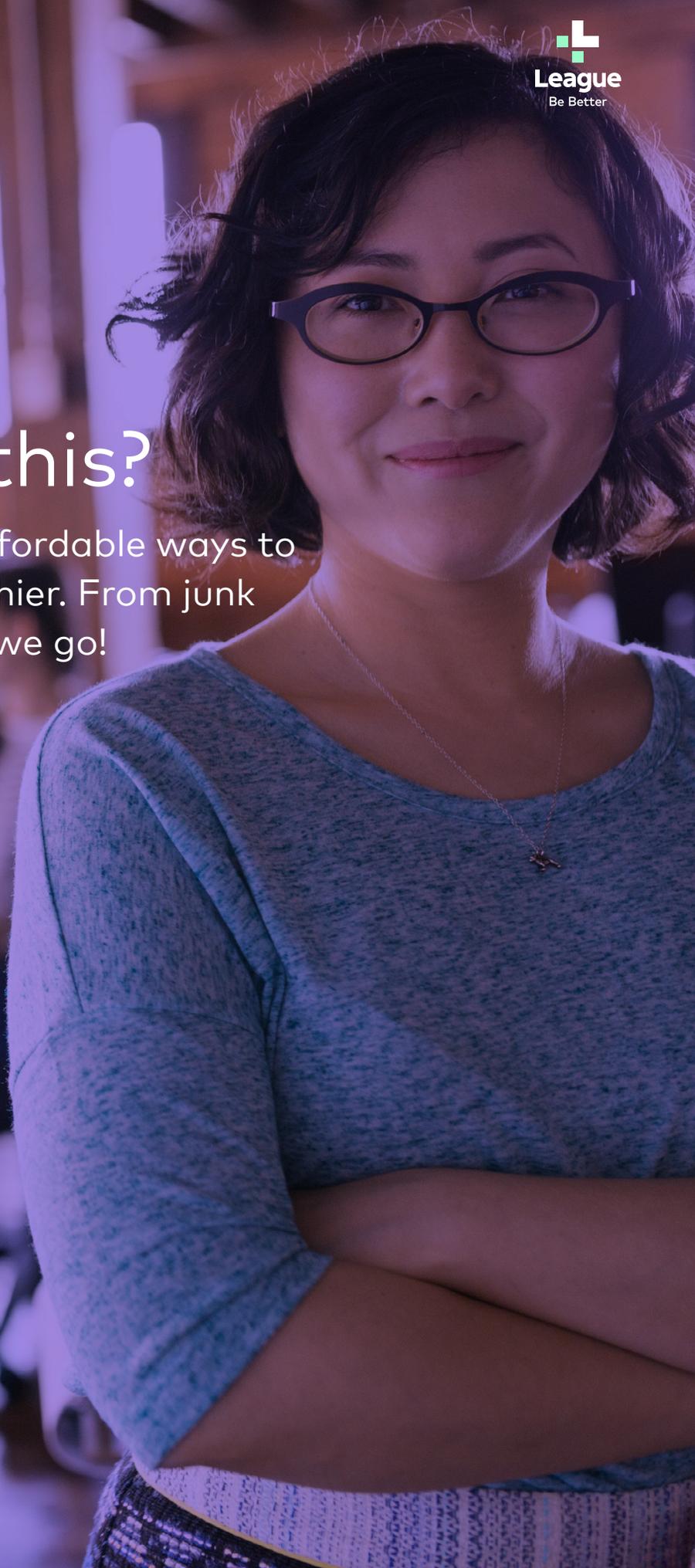
Here's the thing. Your employees eat at least $\frac{1}{3}$ of their meals at the office. That's 5 lunches a week. Throw in a breakfast or dinner here and there, and you've suddenly got a **huge** opportunity to impact your team's eating habits in a positive way. If you can see their nutrition as a part of your responsibility, you may not only see the benefits for your team, but your business too.

A few quick stats on how easy it could be make a positive impact with your team's nutrition:



Ready to do this?

Great! We've got 7 easy, affordable ways to make your workplace healthier. From junk foods to superfoods—here we go!



1

Encourage hydration

This is by far, the easiest—and cheapest!—thing you can do for your team. Make drinking water fun and tasty, so that your employees will opt for a nice, refreshing glass of water—instead of their daily dose of caffeine. Try:

- Providing large, company-branded water bottles to your team
- Offering ice-cold, filtered water. Or ice cubes. Or both!
- Bringing lemons (or other fruit) into the office to give your water a bit of flavour
- Getting a water tap where employees can grab themselves a “pint” of delicious sparkling water



2 Beware the breakfast

We've all heard it before: "Breakfast is the most important meal of the day." Even so, it's still a good message to reinforce at the office. Why? Because what your team consumes for breakfast can help set them up for a more focused, more productive day. And considering store-bought breakfast foods are typically high in refined sugars and starches, it may be time to rethink the breakfast options you've been keeping in your kitchen.

Bring in breakfast foods that are high in protein, fibre and healthy fats. These are a few ideas to get your team well on their way:

- Quiche
- Egg muffins
- Protein smoothies
- Oatmeal buffet
- Plain Greek yogurt
- Healthy parfait toppings: hemp seeds, chia seeds, pumpkin seeds, fruit
- Lemon water

Try our favourite, a quick and easy recipe for overnight oats:

Classic Overnight Oats

 2 min

Ingredients

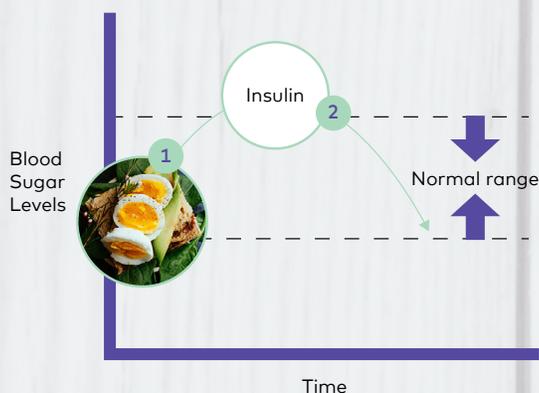
- 1/2 cup plain Greek yogurt
- 1/2 cup (heaping) rolled oats
- 2/3 cup unsweetened milk of choice
- 1 tbsp chia seeds or ground flaxmeal
- 1/2 tsp vanilla extract
- Pinch of salt
- 0-2 tbsp honey or maple syrup

Instructions

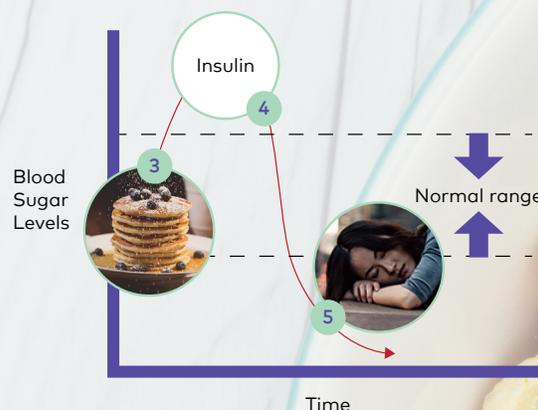
1. Whisk together all ingredients in a medium-sized mixing bowl. Spoon into a jar with a tight-fitting lid.
2. Close and refrigerate for at least 4 hours, but preferably overnight before eating.

Blood Sugar 101: How what you eat can impact productivity

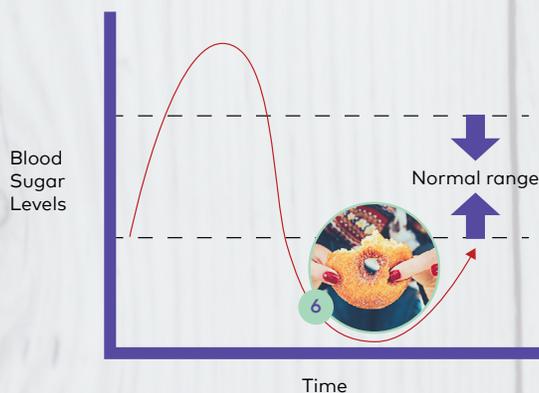
We all know high-sugar meals aren't the best option. They're unhealthy—that's obvious! But what you may not know is that consuming these delicious, sugary foods sends your hormones on a rollercoaster. It's how your body and mind react to these ebbs and flows of hormones that will affect how productive you are.



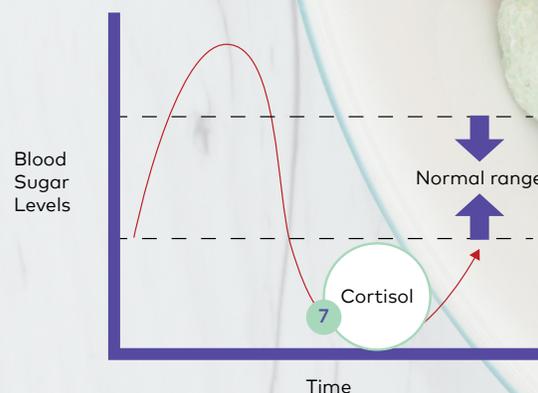
1. When you eat a high-protein breakfast, your body digests a small amount of sugar and your blood sugar rises only slightly.
2. As that happens, your body releases insulin to take the sugar and transfer it to your cells for energy.



3. When you eat a breakfast that is high in refined sugars & starches, but low in protein, your blood sugar spikes well above the normal range.
4. As a result, your body releases way more insulin than it typically would.
5. With excess insulin comes a blood sugar deficit, resulting in an energy crash.



6. Your body will start to crave something sweet to bring your blood sugar (read: energy) back up, or...



7. ...your body will release a stress hormone, called cortisol. Who would have thought breakfast could be so stressful!?

3

Create a community of grazers

Our parents may have told us to avoid snacks between meals, but we're here to tell you the opposite! It's actually a good idea to encourage snacking—a.k.a., grazing—rather than eating 3 large meals per day. Those spikes and drops in blood sugar we were talking about, they tend to occur after eating larger portions, which can be hard on the old brain, resulting in lowered productivity.²

If you're bringing snacks to the office, look for foods that won't send your team's blood sugar on a rollercoaster ride:

- Fruit
- Protein bars
- Unsalted nuts & seeds
- Nut butters
- Fresh vegetables
- Hummus
- Plain Greek yogurt (flavoured can be very high in refined sugar!)
- Herbal teas
- Kombucha
- >70% dark chocolate



4

Minimize temptation

You know what they say: Out of sight, out of mind. In this case, we mean it literally—your team is less likely to consume unhealthy foods if they aren't in front of them. One study demonstrated this very clearly by placing some candies at the end of a row of desks.³ Employees who were sitting at the far end consumed less candy than their peers. So the idea is not to necessarily get rid of *all* of the fun treats, but to minimize temptation when you can. Try these healthy ideas for a start:

- Exchange jars of candy or chocolate for healthier options, like almonds or banana chips.
- Hold healthy snack potlucks whenever you can. Try salad bars where each team member contributes with a different ingredient, or recipe challenges where potluck favourites are transformed into healthier options.
- Be strategic when it comes to where you keep your snacks and treats. The less visible, the better. Using containers that your team can't see through is the simplest, and best, trick of all.

Everything in moderation

It's human nature to want what we can't have, so make sure your healthy plan doesn't backfire on you. If your team is denied of all treats, they may just end up bingeing during breaks or after 5 o'clock.⁴ Let them indulge from time to time—this will result in better self-control in the long run.



5

Cater mindfully

Pizza. Pasta. Sandwiches. By now, you're probably well aware that these commonly catered foods can leave your employees feeling tired and sluggish. So raise your hand if you agree it's high time to rethink your catering selections. Why not opt for foods that will help keep your team clear-brained and performing at their best?

- Celebrate with savoury rather than sweet. Try healthy alternatives to birthday cake, like Mexican-themed guacamole, salsa and low-sodium nachos.

- If you like the simplicity and selection when it comes to sandwiches, try switching to wraps instead.
- Choose a catering service that will customize orders and request the following ratio when plating your team's meals:
 - ½ colourful greens
 - ¼ protein
 - ¼ starch / complex carbs

Comparing Healthy vs. Unhealthy Catering

Sample Weekly Team Budget		Traditional Order-in Options	
1 healthy lunch a week	\$10-\$12 / employee	Pizza w/ Pop for 20	\$8 / employee
		Sandwiches, salad, dessert	\$15.25 / employee
Breakfast bar: overnight oats	\$1 / employee	Breakfast sandwiches	\$9 / employee
A week of snacks	\$4 / employee		
A week of Fresh Fruit	\$1 / employee		

*Order cost based on urban catering options

6

Offer alternatives to coffee or black tea

When enjoyed in moderation, coffee (or black tea) has its benefits, and we certainly aren't suggesting a caffeine-free environment—your team might go on strike! But it doesn't hurt to have easily accessible alternatives in the office kitchen. Stock the coffee station with green tea, herbal teas, matcha, kombucha, turmeric lattes, or even healthy hot chocolate!

Coffee - To Drink or Not to Drink?

Benefits	Drawbacks
antioxidants	anxiety
productivity	stress
happiness	poor sleep

A note on stress!



- High levels of stress can impact eating habits.⁵
- And poor eating habits* can lead to health problems like obesity, hypertension, high blood cholesterol or other nutrition-related problems
- Comparatively, your stress can also feed off eating habits since a multitude of nutrients are required for physiological response to stress.⁶

*skipping meals, excessive dieting, consuming too much caffeine, salt, sugar or fat, over or undereating

7

Teach a staff to fish

Nutrition is a two-way street. As an employer, it makes great business sense to invest in employee health by making smart choices when it comes to the foods you bring into the office. But there are other ways to make your workplace nutrition-focused. Try building your team's awareness with information sessions, and then provide them with the tools and support they need to take their health into their own hands.

Here are a couple of ways to get started:

- **Bring in a nutritionist or dietician.** They can educate your team on the right and wrong foods to eat for productivity, and share easy recipes that make it easy to eat the right foods on the cheap.
 - With [Health@Work](#), League helps employers bring health into their workplace. Our Health Marketplace lets employers choose from a variety of health and wellness professionals, including nutritionists, dieticians and other healthy eating experts, to educate your team through seminars and other sessions.
- **Incentivize your team to be healthier with a wellness challenge** that will set free their inner competitor and motivate them to make positive changes to their eating habits.
 - Mandy King's HEAL Wellness Challenge is an 8-week program that encourages employees to work individually and as a team to create new habits related to nutrition, fitness or self-care.



One step closer to a healthier, happier team

Ready to bring nutrition to work, but not sure where to begin? The steps below will help you implement a nutrition program that will help your team Be Better.

1 Get senior buy-in and complete a needs assessment

Perhaps you're one on a team of many and have noticed there's room for improvement. It's always going to be important to get your leadership on board for your team's nutritional journey as you begin moving forward.

But it's not just the opinion of your leadership team that's important. Ask your staff to help build a good understanding of what they want, and what's important to them to help you move forward. Try a needs assessment to help build the foundations of your program for your team.

Questions like these will help you better understand your team's needs:⁷

What stops you from eating healthy at work?

- I'm too busy to take a break or eat my lunch.
- There aren't enough healthy snacks in the office kitchen.
- Healthy options are way too expensive for my budget.
- Healthy foods are bland, or don't taste very good.
- Healthy options don't appeal to me. (Burger and fries, please!)
- Snacks should be quick and easy—healthy options aren't convenient.
- Everything says "healthy" or "organic" these days. I'm not really sure which options are *really* healthy.
- I find it hard to follow a healthy diet when I'm so stressed at work.
- The foods that are served during meetings or events are not healthy.

What changes should we bring to the workplace to help you eat healthier? (open ended)

What stops you from eating healthy at home?

- I can't afford to buy healthy or organic ingredients.
- I find it hard to follow a healthy diet because of personal issues/stress.
- It's hard to resist tempting foods at home.
- I don't have enough time to shop for groceries.
- I'm too busy to cook and prepare healthy meals at home.
- I'm not sure how to prepare healthy meals.
- I wouldn't know where to begin when it comes to following a healthy diet.
- Nutrition labels are really confusing—they're all Greek to me!

Which of these healthy habits are you interested in?

- How to choose healthier food options when eating out
- How to choose healthier ingredients at the grocery store
- Improving my cooking skills
- Learning more about: _____
- Having these activities at work: _____

Would you like to be screened for any of these health risks?

- Cholesterol
- Blood pressure
- Blood glucose (blood sugar)
- Body Mass Index (BMI)
- Waist Circumference



2 Establish your objectives

If you don't know where you're going, it's much harder to get there. Once you've completed the needs assessment with your team, think about how to build your objectives around what they want and what you hope to achieve. And don't forget to consider your budget as you lay out your plan.

3 Assign responsibilities (to a team)

It can be challenging (if not impossible) for a business owner, CEO or HR Lead to take on employee nutrition over and above their daily to-dos. Gather a great team of, ideally, health-focused individuals who can take on your ideas and execute. And don't be afraid to let them own it.

4 Build a program based on your team's needs—and your budget

Now that you've got a good understanding of what your employees think, established your objectives laid out and assembled a small team to lead the program, the fun really begins! Find the nutrition-focused health plan that you believe will help move the needle on what you want to achieve. Remember, the first time around, it's all about trial and error. The most important thing is to try your



ideas out. You can always revise and adjust as needed.

5 Include variety in your program

Variety is the spice of life. It's also super important considering each of your employees has different health habits and goals. While promoting delicious alternatives to coffee will speak to a good number of your staff, those who don't drink coffee will have zero interest in this particular campaign. Focusing on different areas of nutrition will keep your wellness initiatives fresh, exciting and engaging for your team.

6 Launch the program

This is it - all your hard work is going to come alive in your nutrition program, version 1.0. Consider all the ways you can make it as dynamic as possible, including but not limited to lunch 'n' learns, incentive programs, seminars, email reminders to your team, or even posters in the lunchroom.



7 Evaluate your plan's impact

After 3 - 6 months, review your team's assessment once more and compare those results with what you're seeing around the office, tracked against your objectives. Did your initiatives help you move the needle? Were participation rates as high as you'd like them to be? Whether your numbers are where you want them to be doesn't matter at this stage. Now's the opportunity to see what updates and improvements you can make for the next round.

The indicators below will help you track the success of your nutrition program in the short and long term.⁸ Ask yourself the following:

1. Formative Indicators: Find out if you're meeting the needs of your team.

- Does your team like the incentives offered?
- Are they motivated to participate?
- Is the information you provide to your team targeted, relevant and easy to understand?

2. Process Indicators: Find out what is (and isn't) working.

- Were all stakeholder groups represented in the committee?
- How did you implement the initiatives?
- How were participation rates?
- Did more employees take part in health risk assessments?
- How satisfied was your team with the program?
- Were you able to stay within budget?

3. Outcome Indicators: Has your program met its objectives? These indicators are some examples of a successful program.

- More team members are making healthy food and drink choices in the office kitchen or during catered events.
- Improved physical assessments (e.g., BMI, waist circumference, blood pressure and blood sugar).
- Employees have the intention to make positive changes to their behaviour and set health goals.
- Increased knowledge when it comes to relevant health matters.
- Positive changes to employee health habits and behaviours.
- Positive changes to workplace culture.

8 Adjust your program and repeat

Make any necessary changes and try it again! Keep evaluating over your established timeframe to see if the changes you're making are having an impact on how they feel. If there's a way to isolate them, see if you can find a noticeable difference in your ROI or business results as well.

And don't forget!



Your nutrition program is an awesome step in the right direction, but it's only part of the battle.⁹ Your work environment and office culture need to be consistently aligned with what you're preaching in your program. Really, you want to make it easy for your team to make those healthy decisions. Think about:

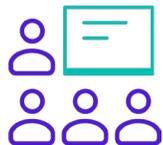
- Refrigerators to store lunches and snacks
- Having cutlery on hand
- Microwaves, blenders or toasters for employees to prepare nutritious lunches
- Time for employees to go to information sessions about healthy eating
- Discouraging your team from eating at their desks

Create a culture of health

Don't have the time to rethink your nutrition and wellness initiatives? Not sure where to start? At League, we want to help you and your team Be Better.

When you join League, you can take advantage of Health@Work, letting you bring health and wellness right into your workplace.

Health@Work offers:



Onsite Treatments	Seminars: Onsite & Virtual	Group Fitness Classes	Health Screenings & Clinics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Massage • Ergonomic Assessment • Nutrition Seminars • And more 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eating & Nutrition • Meditation & Mindfulness • Stress Management • And more 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yoga / Pilates • Boot Camp • Dance Classes • And more 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biometric Screening • Flu Clinic • And more

[Learn More](#)

Learn more about Health@Work and we'll get you started on the journey to help your team Be Better.

About League

League is revolutionizing health benefits by connecting employers and employees to a comprehensive network of health services and benefits, giving them unparalleled choice, convenience and value. League unlocks employee benefits to give everyone the power to act every day and live longer, healthier, happier lives.

Learn more at league.com



About Mandy King



Mandy King is the founder of HEAL, a health & wellness company that works with offices who understand the importance of employee well-being. She provides turn-key, engaging programs that help minimize attrition, increase overall engagement and make the office a healthier, happier place to be. Companies that want to offer their employees the best workplace wellness programs work with HEAL, including Google, LinkedIn, Unilever, TIFF and PwC. and Mandy has been featured in the Globe and Mail, Huffington Post and CBC.



Visit healthyeatingandliving.ca to learn more.

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