

NCCDPHP Success Story

Staten Island Hospital Puts Cafeteria Customers' Health First

By Tanuja Kulkarni

Public Health Challenge

Consuming too much sodium can increase blood pressure, a leading risk factor for heart disease and stroke. In New York City, the average adult consumes about 3,200 mg of sodium every day, nearly 40% more than the recommended daily limit of 2,300 mg, according to a study published in the American Journal of Public Health. Most sodium is added to foods during manufacturing or preparation. The widespread availability of inexpensive processed foods, large portion sizes, and persistent advertising of processed foods can make it challenging to stay within recommended sodium limits.

Approach

RUMC in Staten Island pledged to implement the New York City Food Standards for Cafeterias/Cafes in an effort to reduce sodium in foods and beverages offered by its cafeteria, which serves about 800 people daily. Eleven of the 25 standards address sodium reduction, including increasing the availability of fresh fruits and vegetables and reducing sodium in soups, sandwiches, and entrees. NYC DOHMH assessed the cafeteria, including 434 food and beverage items across a 13-week menu. From the assessment, RUMC and NYC DOHMH developed a tailored action plan, which outlined short-, medium-, and long-term goals to meet the standards.



At A Glance

In New York City, the average adult consumes more than the recommended 2,300 mg daily limit of sodium. With support from the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYC DOHMH), Richmond University Medical Center (RUMC) is increasing the availability of healthier options and reducing sodium served in its cafeteria by adopting the New York City Food Standards for Cafeterias/Cafes. RUMC removed all high-sodium soups and entrées from its menu, improved beverage offerings, and added healthier snack options at the cash register.

As a hospital, it's part of our mission to support the health of everyone who passes through our doors. By making it easier for customers to make healthy choices in the cafeteria every day, we're making a commitment to their health.

- Robert Holzer, Former Food and Nutrition Director

Results

RUMC increased the number of standards met from 9 to 15. To meet short-term goals, RUMC removed entrees with over 800 mg of sodium per serving, including a pork loin entrée, a chicken burrito, and a pork taco. Twelve high-sodium soups were replaced with lower sodium options, removing an average of 300 mg of sodium from each soup. To reduce the possibility of customers making unhealthy impulse buys at the cash register, RUMC removed high-calorie and high-sodium items from the checkout area, including muffins, crumb bars, and cookies, and replaced them with fresh fruits. High-calorie beverage advertisements on branded coolers were replaced with advertisements for low-calorie beverages.

What's Next

RUMC will continue to work on reducing high-sodium options in its cafeteria by adopting more standards. RUMC plans to comply with the standard for prepackaged snacks by removing or replacing current snack offerings to meet nutrition criteria, including 200 mg of sodium or less per package. The medical center also plans to remove high-calorie beverages in containers that exceed 16 oz. The NYC DOHMH will continue to provide guidance through menu and product reviews, on-site assessments, and promotional materials.

Find Out More

Find out more by contacting the Healthy Eating Unit at the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. To read the full New York City Food Standards for Cafeterias/Cafes, visit <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/download/s/pdf/cardio/cafeterias-standards.pdf> This project is supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Cooperative Agreement CDC-RFA-DP161607) and the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

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