Why is it important?

We eat about a third of our day's food at work, so the workplace is an ideal place to help staff make healthy choices.

Many factors within the workplace have a significant role in influencing what and how people eat at work. These are:

- choice, availability and cost of different food and drink options at work

- promotion and marketing of food and drink choices

- working practices in the workplace (such as workload, hours of work)

- facilities available for preparing and buying food and drinks buying and/or

- dietary habits of workmates

- each staff members knowledge and skills around healthy food

Healthy eating is about eating a variety of foods from the four food groups. The Eating and Activity Guidelines recommend the food and drink a workplace provides should include:

- plenty of vegetables and fruit
- grain foods, mostly wholegrain and those naturally high in fibre
- some milk and milk products, mostly low and reduced fat
- some legumes (such as chickpeas and lentils), nuts, seeds, or fish and other seafood, eggs or poultry, or red meat with the fat removed
- Food should be mostly prepared with or contain minimal saturated fat, salt (sodium) and added sugar. It should be mostly whole or less processed

- Plain water and unflavored milk should be the predominant cold drink options

Facts

Supporting your staff to make healthy food choices is in the best interest of your workplace. The benefits to your workplace include:

- Reduced absenteeism - healthy staff tend to take less sick leave and are generally less likely to develop ongoing conditions.
- Reduced accident rates - healthy staff are less likely to be fatigued so are more alert to safety issues and less likely to be injured.
- Supports staff mental well-being – a balanced healthy diet can reduce the risk of depression, whilst excessive consumption of unhealthy foods can exacerbate depression and anxiety.

Eating healthy food reduces our chances of developing nutrition-related diseases such as:

- Cardiovascular/heart conditions

- high blood pressure

- high cholesterol

- type 2 diabetes

- kidney failure

- some cancers

Key Messages for your workplace

- Working adults consume a third of their daily food intake during work hours
- Many factors within the workplace have a significant role in influencing what and how people eat at work.
- Creating a workplace that supports staff to make healthy food choices can help reduce absenteeism and workplace injuries
- Food and drink provided by a workplace should align to the Eating and Activity Guidelines for New Zealand Adults as much as possible.