

Designing the Healthy Vending Machine

















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When you think vending machine, does your mouth salivate as you dream of the scrumptious treats that are waiting for you at the click of a button and drop of a coin? Highly doubtful... yet they do the trick when hard-working employees miss lunch, have afternoon hunger pains or have to stay late at work. The snacks offered in vending machines are generally unhealthy and, at times, offer variations of well-known products that were not big sellers at the supermarket.

If employees snack on soda, candy bars and chips several times a week to combat busy schedules, they will most likely pack on a few pounds. This can drastically affect your healthcare costs, seeing as how obesity is a catalyst for far more severe illnesses such as heart disease, diabetes and cancer. However, you, as the employer, can make requests to the vending machine company to stock machines with healthier alternatives for employees in a hunger pinch. These items should be 100 percent trans-fat free with no hydrogenated oils or shortening in the ingredients.

To help employees identify which items are particularly good for them, mark them with colored stickers or ask the vending machine company to place them on the same shelf(s). Also, to combat the often higher price of healthy foods, consider subsidizing their costs to get these items moving. Though this may pose an initial expense for the company, your healthcare costs will be lower in the end because your employees will be eating healthier foods. In addition to these suggestions, here are some healthier alternatives as opposed to offering a chocolate bar, chips or sugary soda:

-  Trans fat-free popcorn
-  Trans fat-free potato chips such as Baked Lays or Sun Chips
-  Nuts such as almonds, pistachios or cashews
-  Pumpkin and sunflower seeds
-  Dried fruits such as cranberries, apricots and raisins
-  Fruit leathers
-  Low-fat crackers such as Triscuits and Wheat Thins
-  Brown rice crackers
-  Canned fruit in natural juices
-  Rice cakes
-  Whole grain granola and fruit bars
-  Fresh fruit
-  Bottled water
-  Sugar-free beverages
-  Sugar-free cookies
-  Oatmeal