A guide to healthy meetings
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Overview

Workplaces encompass a substantial proportion of the population from a wide variety of socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. Workplaces are a suitable setting for introducing preventive actions to reduce the risk of lifestyle-related noncommunicable diseases (NCDs). Meetings and events make up a significant part of an individual’s working day in office settings. Promoting and supporting healthy behaviours at meetings is one of many strategic approaches to advocate and support workplace health.

This guide summarizes the key aspects to consider while planning and holding meetings, and the gain in terms of public and planetary health. The guide also provides several easy-to-incorporate practices and recommendations to make meetings more sustainable and promote health and well-being. Examples of healthy menu choices, physical activity ideas and checklists are provided.
Background

1.1 Why a healthy meeting?

Meetings and events are a fundamental part of the working culture at the WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia (SEARO), WHO country offices and Member States. They function as a tool to communicate, make decisions, create solutions, and strengthen relationships between colleagues. Meetings and events represent a significant amount of the working day, and can have substantial health impacts on participants. For example, an extended period of being seated can increase sedentary behaviour or be serving of snacks and desserts with high sugar and fat content may disrupt healthy diets. Therefore, promoting healthy meetings is a crucial aspect of improving the health outcomes among working-age adults.
WHO has long advocated the importance of health promotion in the workplace. In 2018, the WHO joined with partners and the public from Geneva and worldwide to stage the “Walk the Talk: The Health for All Challenge” event during the Seventy-first World Health Assembly. A similar event was conducted at the UN General Assembly in 2019, where the South-East Asia Region (SEAR) Member States were actively involved in planning and coordinating the event.

In the same year, the WHO Regional Office for Europe produced a manual to offer guidance and provide feasible examples of planning healthier meetings and events. In 2019, the WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia also produced a guide to planning healthy meetings.

The guides state that a healthy meeting involves making healthy foods and beverages available, requires a tobacco-free environment, and encourages physical activity, to provide opportunities to create a culture of health and well-being and minimize the impact on the environment. To date, these practical guides are the only available documents published by WHO to promote healthy meetings and events in the Organization’s workplace environment.

Member States of the South-East Asia Region have been recognized as global health leaders in the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases. The region played an active role in developing the Global Action Plan for Physical Activity 2018–2030 and monitoring the implementation of the WHO Global Strategy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol. Furthermore, WHO-SEARO also has been actively promoting a healthy work environment with the regional initiative: Promoting a Healthy Lifestyle at the Workplace (“Be the Change” initiative).

Healthy meetings are likely to serve as a promotional movement for healthier lifestyles. In order to facilitate the planning and execution of meetings where healthy lifestyles are advocated and practised, the WHO SEARO presents an update to the 2019 document titled ‘A guide to planning healthy meetings’, which describes a set of actions to encourage
healthy meetings. The updates include utilizing of virtual platforms better for meetings in the post pandemic setting, minimizing the risk of transmission of COVID-19 infection, promoting mental health, and avoiding the harmful use of alcohol.

The goal of the document is to encourage the South-East Asia Region Member States to create a healthy lifestyle culture in the workplace, raise awareness among participants and cultivate social norms around healthier choices and behaviours, and provide information on planning healthy meetings. Implementing this guide can establish leadership and political commitment at the global and regional level towards promoting a healthy and active lifestyle at the workplace.

1.2 The purpose of the guide

This guide aims to provide information on creating a culture of a healthy lifestyle at high-level meetings, technical meetings, and other events in the workplace environments. It is also a framework for WHO SE Asia Region to display health promotion leadership. It can also be adopted by the Member States and other agencies wishing to promote healthy meetings, including health promotion initiatives. The goal is to encourage WHO-SEAR Member States to create a healthy lifestyle culture in the workplace, raise awareness among participants, staff, and event organisers of the benefits of healthy diets and regular physical activity, and cultivate social norms around healthier choices and behaviours.

1.3 Target audience of the guide

This guideline is meant to be used by employees at the WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia, country offices and Member States. It can also be useful for anyone tasked with planning meetings or events in the workplace.
Healthy meeting recommendations

This guideline addresses six topics: tobacco-free environment, alcohol-free meetings and events, physical activity and non-sedentary lifestyle, healthy food and nutrition options, mental health, and environmental sustainability.

2.1 Tobacco-free environment

The WHO South-East Asia Region is among the largest producers and consumers of tobacco products. The region is home to 237,100 tobacco users (226,300 males and 10,800 females) in 2018. It accounts for 1.6 million deaths due to tobacco annually additionally, second-hand smoke accounts for up to one-fifth of overall deaths due to cardiovascular diseases (CVD).

Article 8 of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control\[9\] defines a “workplace” as “any place used by people during their employment or work”. The meeting venue is included under this definition. Hence, it is important that meeting venues and the surrounding environment are tobacco-free.

Actions

- **Create 100% tobacco-free environments at the meeting venue and the surrounding environment.** Exposure of non-smokers to second-hand smoke cannot be controlled by air cleaning or mechanical air exchange. Ventilation and smoking areas, whether separately ventilated from non-smoking areas or not, do not reduce exposure to a safe level of risk and are not recommended. This recommendation also includes smokeless tobacco as well as electronic cigarette or similar products.

- **Support being a good role model.** Everyone can take a stand against smoking and set an example through smoke-free environments and education and awareness on the subject.
2.2 Alcohol-free meetings and events

In 2016, the harmful use of alcohol resulted in 3 million deaths worldwide and 132.6 million disability-adjusted life years (DALYs).\textsuperscript{10} In recent years, there has been a gradual but significant increase in alcohol consumption among the general population in the Region. The Region also faces a high prevalence of heavy episodic drinking, or binge drinking, and a situation of unrecorded alcohol intake.

These have worsened the severity of alcohol-related problems such as NCDs, violence and road traffic injuries. The “SAFER” initiative recommends that everyone should be actively involved in strengthen restrictions on alcohol availability to protect people from the harmful use of alcohol.\textsuperscript{11} This would include limiting alcohol availability during meetings and events.

Actions

- **Do not offer alcohol during meetings, particularly those organized by WHO.** A substance with the potential to cause such extensive harm is not suitable for an organization dedicated to the promotion of public health or any institution with the desire to promote health. A healthy meeting should set an example of an alcohol-free environment to demonstrate leadership in promoting a healthy lifestyle and respecting the socio cultural background of the meeting participants.

- **Support being a good role model.** Everyone can take a stand and set an example by not drinking alcoholic beverages during functions and educate people about the issue.

- **Provide signage on not serving alcohol during the meeting.**

- **Serve alcohol-free alternatives during the receptions and celebrations.**
2.2 Promoting physical activity and addressing sedentary lifestyle during meetings and events

Numerous health benefits are associated with regular physical activity, including lowering the risk of coronary heart disease, stroke, hypertension and type 2 diabetes, improving cardiorespiratory and muscular fitness, reducing depression, as well as bringing about many benefits related to work performance and productivity of employees. Physical activity such as yoga and boxing has long been part of the Region’s culture. However, due to urbanization, people’s patterns of living have changed. The recently updated WHO 2020 guidelines on physical
activity and sedentary behaviours introduce the new concept of “every move counts”, which broaden the opportunity for being physically active with any number of movements.¹²

**Actions**

- **Create opportunities for participants to move during meetings throughout the day, which is essential to stimulate physical activity and break sedentary behaviours.** The meeting should provide opportunities for participants to be physically active. Some suggested actions:

  - Organize regular physical activity breaks such as standing break, stretching, and moving breaks during the meeting as appropriate. These breaks should be included in the meeting agenda (Table 1).
  - Different types of meetings can provide various kinds of physical activity opportunities (Table 2). *More creative ideas for physical activity and sedentary behaviour breaks can be found in the Annex2.*

**Table 1. Sedentary Behaviour Break**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical behaviour break</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Standing break           | Stand up during the meeting to relieve physical discomfort from a prolonged period of being sitted. | • Stand up and move around the room for a few minutes or change seats with someone else.  
  • Ask participants to march on the spot and raise their arms for 30–60 seconds. |
| Stretching break         | Stretching the body helps relax the body after long periods of sitting while also improving blood circulation and muscle flexibility. | • Encourage participants to stand up and stretch in place. |
| Moving break             | A moving break is a 5–10-minute group activity, often accompanied by music that encourages participants to do simple aerobic exercises. | • Stretch, dance and move to traditional music (video examples can be found at https://www.who.int/southeastasia/health-topics/physical-activity). |

b According to the new 2020 guideline, there was insufficient evidence to provide a precise time limit on the amount of sedentary behaviour.
### Table 2. Types of meetings and physical activity promotion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of meeting</th>
<th>Organizing tips on physical activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short-full day meeting</td>
<td>• Consider one or two sessions of physical activity break during the meeting. They can be done before and after the meeting (see the examples from table 1 and Annex2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Organize dynamic social activities during the meeting, such as ice-breaking, networking sessions, or working in breakout groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mult-day meeting</td>
<td>Include all the organizing tips from short-full day meetings plus the following:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Schedule and promote physical activity sessions before the meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Organize early morning physical activity opportunities such as yoga, jogging or walking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtual meeting</td>
<td>Include all the organizing tips from short-full day meetings plus the following:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Prepare a stretching video and invite participants to follow the movements.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Offer participants an environment conducive to being active.** A healthy meeting should have a surrounding environment that provides safe and appropriate opportunities to achieve the recommended 150–300 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity per week.

**Actions**

- If possible, choose a venue or event location where participants can easily and safely take a walk and/or a meeting venue with a fitness facility.
○ Provide exercise stations or equipment in the hall or meeting room, for instance, standing desk, mobile phone charging bikes, table tennis table, and exercise/resistance bands.

○ Physical activity participation should be voluntary with no pressure to join, culturally appropriate and sensitive to physical limitations, and be creative, safe and fun

○ WHO recommends at least 150 to 300 minutes of moderate aerobic activity per week (or the equivalent time of vigorous activity) for all adults

○ Promoting any movement and micro-exercise. ‘Every move counts’ – physical activity of any type, and any duration can improve health and wellbeing, more the better

○ Advise participants to avoid prolonged sitting to prevent back pain and straining of the eyes:
  ○ Sit with the back resting against the back of the chair and avoid leaning forward
  ○ If the viewing screen is perpendicular, turn the entire body and chair to view the screen (as opposed to turning just turning the neck)
  ○ Avoid resting elbows, forearms, or wrists on hard surfaces or sharp edges
  ○ Apply the 20-20-20 rule eye exercise for limiting eye strain: every 20 minutes, look 20 feet away and hold for 20 seconds
  ○ Walk around for a couple of minutes for every 60 to 90 minutes of sitting.

2.3 Providing healthy food and beverages and ensuring food safety

Diet in WHO South-East Asia region countries consist of primarily rice, noodles or breads as the base ingredient. The distinctive feature of the South-East Asian diet is the abundance of fruits and vegetables, seafood, and herbs and spices. Healthy eating decreases the risk of chronic diseases. Rapid urbanization and changing lifestyles have led to a shift in dietary patterns with greater consumption of foods high in energy, fats, free sugars and salt/sodium. At the same time, many people do not eat enough fruit, vegetables and other sources of dietary
fibre such as whole grains. Providing a variety of healthy options and nutritional labelling are key to promoting a healthy diet during meetings. The provision of nutritional information which indicates the main ingredients and provides nutritional information that helps participants in making healthier food choices promotes healthy consumption.

**Actions**

- **Assess if the meeting requires food intervals or provisioning.** When organizing a meeting, assess the length of time, time of day and number of people attending the meeting before deciding whether food should be part of the work session.

- **Ensure that a variety of healthy options is provided throughout the event.** Ensure healthier options are attractively presented, appealing, and taste good. They should be placed in prominent positions, where they are most likely to be seen and chosen.

**Fresh fruit and vegetables**

- Fresh fruit and vegetables should be the basis of any snacks provided and can also be the main component of starters, side dishes, and desserts.

**Fats and oils**

- Select foods that contain healthy sources of unsaturated fats and avoid food products that contain transfat.

- Opt for cooking methods that require less or no fat or oil, such as steaming, grilling or sautéing, instead of frying.

**Whole grains**

- Offer whole-grain rice, breads/rotis, pasta, cereal or toast and bagels.
Proteins
- Choose lean protein such as fish, poultry, shellfish, or lean meat/low-fat protein options.
- Include plant-based sources of protein, such as beans and lentils, tofu, nuts, nut butter and beans.

Desserts and sugar
- As a preference, serve fresh fruit for dessert, and where other dessert options are chosen, serve in small portions and ensure that they are low in sugar and fats.
- Do not place candy or candy bowls in the meeting space.

Salt
- Choose products with lower salt content and limit the use of highly processed foods.

Beverages
- Make water the default beverage and available throughout the entire meeting, and avoid sugar-sweetened beverages such as soda, juice drinks, flavoured milk and coffee, sweetened teas, sport and energy drinks.

Nutrition labelling
- If possible, include nutrition labels for the food served. The format of nutrition labels should be simple and easy to understand so that participants can make informed choices.
2.4 Promoting mental health

Mental health problems are prevalent in all working populations. It is estimated that 5% of working populations in high-income countries are affected by severe mental health problems, with 15% affected by moderate mental health problems. Common mental health disorders reported in the workplace include stress, anxiety, and depression, and long meeting hours can add to stress.

Actions

- **Value mental health and well-being as core assets when organizing meetings and events.** Ensure the meeting is promoting positive mental health and well-being for both participants and organizers. Suggested actions:
  - Manage the meeting time as in the planned schedule.
  - Assess if extra meeting hours are necessary, and where possible, extended meeting hours should allow participants to have enough rest for conducting activities on the following day.
- Allow short breaks during meetings, combined with physical activity and other mindfulness sessions.
- Provide facilities and arrange breakout times for rituals by participants such as a praying room and longer lunch breaks.
- Support breastfeeding by providing appropriate spaces for lactating mother during meetings.
- **Establish and implement firm policies and standards to respect, protect and fulfil human rights and fundamental freedoms.** Organizers should have a policy in place regarding harassment, discrimination and bullying during meetings and events. Some actions include providing a clear mechanism to report, investigate and punish unacceptable and other disruptive behaviours during meetings and events.
- Promote professionalism, consideration of and respect for others during meetings and events.
- **Support being a good role model.** Everyone can take a stand and set an example by exercising responsible behaviours during functions.

Looking after your mental health in the workplace:

1. Talk about feelings
2. Keep active
3. Eat well
4. Avoid smoking and drinking alcohol
5. Keep communicating with other people
6. Ask for help when feeling tired or overwhelmed
7. Take a break
8. Do something you are good at
9. Accept who you are
10. Care for others

### 2.6 Environmental sustainability

The 2030 Sustainable Development Goal Agenda has raised a concern over the consumption of resources worldwide. The reduction of waste generation includes reduction, recycling and reuse. Sustainability considerations can help organizers minimize the negative impacts of a meeting on the environment. Communication with participants enables organizers to adopt environmentally friendly practices effectively. A healthy meeting should also consider minimizing the negative impacts on the environment.
Actions

- **Assess whether a face-to-face meeting is required.** Consider a virtual meeting such as a teleconference and webinar, to limit travel and reduce the carbon footprints.

- **Ensure the meeting location is accessible to all participants.** The meeting venue should be located so that it can be easily accessed by foot, bicycle or public transport.

- **If possible, choose the meeting location that implements environmentally friendly building principles.** The meeting venue should have energy-efficient and energy-saving policies and advanced systems of waste collection and recycling.

- **Adopt environmentally friendly practices in planning and organizing the meeting.** Some recommendations include:
  - Avoid unnecessary printouts and distribute all meeting materials electronically before and during the meeting.
  - Select foods and beverages that are locally produced and order them in bulk platters rather than single servings.
  - Reconfirm the number of food items with caterers to avoid food waste.
  - Encourage reusable conference items such as mugs, water containers, washable serving containers, eating utensils, name tags and stationery.
Healthy meeting and the COVID-19 pandemic

Moving forward towards the new normal in healthy meeting

The COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent work-from-home and social distancing have led to significant changes in the way of arranging meetings and events. One of these changes is increased use of video conferencing as a mean of communicating.

However, where restrictive public health and social measures are being progressively adjusted in response to an evolving epidemiology, the need for face-to-face meetings and events should be planned, operated and evaluated based on thorough risk assessments. A healthy meeting should follow the available guidance aimed at decreasing transmission of COVID-19.
Actions

Whenever possible, consider holding virtual or hybrid meetings, to avoid risk of travelling and mass gathering. Suggested actions:

- Create a remote-friendly schedule: online workshops should be shorter than live workshops, schedule with adequate breaks and a mix of tasks.
- Consider time zones when scheduling online meetings and workshops for a global team. Plan for optimal timings as far as possible.
- Take regular breaks: breaks could be more frequent than during face-to-face meeting

If a face-to-face meeting is required, the context in which the events take place should be examined. Key considerations include, but are not limited to the following:

- **Development of a preparedness and response plan** aimed to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission as well as the likelihood of straining health services caused by the meeting. The plan should include:
  - Coordination and collaborations with all stakeholders, including event organizers, health authorities and other relevant authorities;
  - Assessment of available capacities and resources, including provision of human resources and procurement of equipment and other medical consumables, as well as isolation rooms and regular cleaning schedules for the venue.

- **Modifications of the meeting venue, facilities and equipment**
  - Hosting the event outdoors rather than indoors and adjusting the official venue capacity to include physical distancing;
  - Regulating the flow and density of people entering, attending and departing from the meeting;
  - Ensuring regular and thorough cleaning and disinfection of the venue by designated staff;
  - Ensuring availability of handwashing facilities with soap and water and/or handrub dispensers;
  - Disseminating key messages on basic preventive measures, as well as actions and steps to be followed in case of people developing symptoms of COVID-19 during the meeting.
### Annex 1

#### Healthy meetings checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tobacco-free environment</th>
<th>Check</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Have you ensured a tobacco-free environment in all areas linked to the meeting?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Did you ensure that the no smoking policy is implemented/enforced?</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alcohol-free meetings and events</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Have you ensured that there will be no alcohol served throughout the meeting, including reception and special side-events?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Promoting physical activity and addressing sedentary lifestyle during meetings and events</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Is the venue or event located can easily and safely take a walk or attend a fitness facility?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Will the dress code be appropriate to be physically active during the meeting?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Can the meeting or part of it be organized in a ‘moving format’?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Checked on participants’ accessibility needs?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Are enough breaks incorporated into the agenda with opportunities for variety of physical activities?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is advice provided to participants to avoid long hours being seated to prevent back pain and eyes strain?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Providing healthy food and beverages and ensuring food safety</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Does the menu include variety that include healthy food choices?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Are all food groups included in the menu?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Do fruits and vegetables make up a good proportion of the menu?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are fruits and vegetables offered with every meal and snack break?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are wholegrain products served with all main meals?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ensured less use of saturated fat, salt and sugar in all food that are on offer?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are all the selected foods and beverages culturally appropriate?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ensured that sauces, dressings and condiments are served on the side?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the food visually appealing and tasty?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you ensure that fruits and vegetables are placed at the start of the buffet queue?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you make sure that the items offered for dessert are healthy and low in fat and sugar?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you request for smaller plates?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you requested the caterers to place nutritional information including calorie count and serving size next to the food being served?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was information on food allergies, dietary restrictions and special dietary needs requested for prior to the meeting?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you ensure that water is freely available?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is safe food handling practised at all times?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Promoting mental health**

| Have you arrange meeting agenda and discussion time properly to keep the time as scheduled, including physical activity and praying time? |
| Are meeting areas and facilities properly arranged for ritual and breastfeeding use? |
| Have you communicated a mechanism to report an unacceptable and other disruptive behaviours during the meetings and events? |
## Environmental sustainability

- Is the meeting location accessible to all participants?
- Have you ensured that plastic and other bio-nondegradable items are avoided?
- Have you arranged for an appropriate system of waste collection and proper disposal?
- Reusable washable serving containers and utensils
- All utensils used are made of recyclable material
- Minimize use of paper and printing
- If paper is used, is recyclable paper used and printed double sided in adequate numbers for sharing?
Annex 2
Physical activity suggestions for meetings

Tips for virtual meetings

- If a 60-minute meeting is being planned, consider scheduling it for 50 minutes instead. This gives participants 5–10 minutes for transition from any other virtual meetings they may have to attend. If the meeting is of 30 minutes’ duration, make it 25 minutes long.
- In order to optimize the participants’ ability to pay attention effectively, schedule breaks (of 5–10 min.) after every 45–60 minutes.
- Slow the meetings. The normal pace of in-person meetings is too fast for Zoom meetings in most cases. Try to create pauses throughout the meeting to pace it better.
- Make meetings interactive by using functions such as “raised hand”, “Q&A”, “polls” and “breakout rooms”. Just listening to someone speak for the entire meeting is very difficult for human attention spans, and even more so on Zoom.
- Be mindful of how much screen time is expected for participants to engage in on each day. Extended screen time causes fatigue and leads to inattentiveness, errors and unhealthy strain on the eye and body.
- Consider giving participants the option to decide whether to have their camera on or off. “Off–camera time” can be an effective way to manage screen fatigue.
- During the first couple of minutes of the meeting, invite participants to check in with themselves by lowering their gaze, taking a deep breath, and being silent for a few seconds.
- Take some time to connect with meeting participants. Check in with coworkers at the start of the meeting and greet them or ask them non-work-related questions.
- Schedule in moments of reflection throughout meetings, perhaps between speakers and/or topics. Give people 1–2 minutes to consolidate their thoughts about the material that has been covered till then.
- At the end of the meeting, review and summarize what was accomplished and reaffirm what needs to be done before the next meeting.
- Stick to the schedule: start on time and end on time.
- If the meeting is longer than 60 minutes, ensure a stretch break in the agenda.
Schedule a physical activity and/or stretch break for 1–2 minutes for every hour of sitting time. Select a couple of different stretches to perform during the break. Insert a slide into the powerpoint deck to serve as a reminder.

Make it clear at the start of the meeting that walking, standing and stretching during the meeting is allowed and even encouraged. Standing/walking discussions during group activities can also be included for in-person meetings.

“Deep breathing breaks” are best suited at the beginning and end of the meeting day.

Stretching breaks can be executed while being seated or standing.

Encourage attendees to stand, stretch or move around within the meeting room as needed, and the flexibility to do so can be pointed out at the start of the meeting.

Consider an activity based on step count using the smartphone pedometer and set an informal target for participants to reach.

Some easy to incorporate physical exercises during the meetings

- **Simple chair exercise** suggestions that can be performed by anyone are suited for short meetings but can be tried at longer meetings too and are particularly useful for differently abled individuals.

- **Arms to the ceiling stretch** involves stretching the arms with the fingers of both hands interlocked and palms pointing upwards. Hold the position for 10 seconds. Then lean on to your right in a curve till you feel the stretch along the left side of your torso. Come back to the neutral position. Repeat the same movement to your left. Repeat 10 times.

- **Shoulder and upper arm stretch** involves extending the right arm straight in front of you. Grab the elbow of the extended hand with the left hand and pull it across the chest till you feel the shoulder and upper back muscles stretch maximally. Hold on for 10 seconds. Repeat with the other arm.

- **Spinal twist** can be performed by crossing the legs right over left. Slowly twist the body rightwards to back of the chair. Hold on for 15 seconds. Slowly turn back to face forward. Repeat the movement in the opposite direction. Repeat the exercise 10 times.

- **To perform leg extensions** grab the seat of your chair, steady yourself and extend your legs parallel to the floor. Flex and point the toes towards the body. Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat 10 times.
Annex 3
Options for meeting meals – healthy recipes

Mini snacks and finger foods

- Snacks should be improvised using local recipes and foods. Adding vegetables, fruit, fish or chicken to rice, noodle or flour-based main courses and serving small portions can create imaginative and healthy snack options.
- Local pickles and chutneys can be used with reduced salt to increase taste and add variety to the meals. The liberal use of herbs and spices also helps improve taste in a low-fat, low-salt context.
- Imaginative presentation can help reduce negative bias in the consumer.

A great variety of regional breads exist, which can be the base for snacks with healthy toppings or fillings

- Mini versions of whole wheat breads, chappati, naan, roti, and paratha breads can be used in the style of wraps or pita bites, which can be filled with boiled or lightly sautéed vegetables, low-fat cheeses, and low-salt pickles and nuts.
- Mini breads such as pizza, chappati, paratha, roti, roshi, naan or crackers can be used with vegetable, chicken or fish toppings.
- Soft fermented foods such as uttappam, palappam and hoppers can be used as a base for toppings using vegetables, fresh onions, tomato, cucumber and green chilli.
- Pancakes or soft fermented breads such as dosa can be utilized for wraps with healthy fillings.
- Sandwiches should use multigrain or brown bread whenever possible, and have a greater proportion of vegetables to bread.

Fillings and toppings

- Fillings: modify traditional recipes to replace starchy roots with other vegetables. Use healthy salad options such as batar da’an (pumpkin, corn, mungbean mix), aalu achar (potato salad) or bodi Koa char (boiled bean salad).
Suggested toppings: *gado gado* (lotek), mango and coriander salad, pineapple and celery salad, tofu pan fried with vegetables and peanut sauce, bean sprouts and vegetable mix, *som tam* (papaya salad), green mango salad, *mas huni* or *kulhiboakibaa* (tuna cake, coconut spice mix), *laphet thohk* (green tea salad).

Include herbs/nuts wherever possible in the preparation of fillings and marinades.

Use mustard paste, low-fat mayonnaise or avocado spread on breads instead of butter.

Herbs, spices, tomato-based *sambhar, kimchi* (with less salt), *budu* (fermented seafood), *ikan bilis, ikan sabuko* and pickles with less oil and salt can be added to fillings and toppings in small amounts to enhance taste.

**Rice or rice flour items**

- Rice flour or wheat flour dumplings such as *momo* that are filled with vegetables, fish or chicken and other lean meats are healthy.

- Sticky rice-based items as regionally appropriate may be filled with vegetable/fish/chicken. The use of seaweed is common in some countries. *Budu tasi* (seaweed salad) can be served as an accompaniment. Minimize the use of soy sauce on the side.

- Rice or rice noodles with mixed vegetables in small snack-sized servings can be offered.

**Vegetable dishes served in small portions as snacks**

- Many varieties of *chaat* can be made, such as *chaat* prepared with peanuts or chickpeas or *mung* or lentil or broccoli with onion, tomato, *chaat masala*, lemon and coriander, and served in small portions.

- Most hollow vegetables (chillis, capsicum, brinjal, tomato) may be stuffed with a mixture of seasoned, vegetable/nut/dried fruit fillings and served raw or grilled but must not be battered or fried.

- Barbecued vegetables and yams including sweet potatoes can be served with pureed fruit and nut marinades or sauces.

- Baked items using gram flour can be offered: most of the regionally available pulses can be ground to produce gram flour of different flavours. These can be mixed or used separately and made into small dumplings with vegetables.
○ Potato or yam balls mixed with herbs and gram flour as well as other snacks such as fish balls or *samosa* can be baked rather than deep-fried.

○ Salads with low-fat dressings and herbs can also be served in small portions.

○ Lightly salted or unsalted nuts.

*Dairy products*

○ Provide low-fat yoghurt or curd with fruit and nuts.

*Breakfast ideas*

Serve varieties of fruit and vegetables with no added sugar, whole-grain foods and low-fat dairy products. If serving fish or meats, they should be cooked using less oil, and the use of either low-salt sauces or less salt should be encouraged. When serving eggs, scrambled eggs or omelettes can be mixed with vegetables.

*Food options*

○ Salads with low-fat and low-salt dressing, local yoghurts, curd (low-fat or with the fat layer removed) and cottage cheese can be offered in place of dressings.

○ Fruit pulp, fruit conserve (low sugar) instead of jams, and peanut butter and low-fat local cheeses are other options.

○ Muesli/bran-based cereals with fruit and low-fat yoghurt.

○ Whole-grain breads, rice, noodles, pasta with vegetables, chicken or fish-based side dishes.

○ Fried rice, noodles or pasta, with extra vegetables.

○ Steamed rice and curries cooked with reduced fat/cream/coconut milk.

○ Fermented breads such as *dosa, uttappam*, hoppers and *idli* are healthy, as well as flatbreads such as *chappati, paratha* and *naan* prepared with whole wheat flour. The accompanying dishes should have less oil and more vegetables and herbs. Add other vegetables to potato dishes. Add vegetables to *paneer bhurji* (grated *paneer* or Indian cottage cheese).

○ *Masala idli* stuffed with vegetables, and/or *uttappam* with added oats and vegetables. *Thalipeeth* (multigrain bread), *lauki thepla* (breads) with added vegetables.

○ *Sambar* with extra vegetables.
Paratha and dosa filled with vegetables instead of potatoes and served with non-fat raita.

Upma or pongal should be prepared with reduced fat and more added vegetables.

Rice flour or wheat flour dumplings (momo) with vegetables, fish or lean meat fillings.

Natural fruit juices, such as coconut water or vegetable juices without added sugar, and unsweetened tea/coffee.

Healthy lunch/dinner options

- Soups with reduced fat and no cream (milk or corn-flour thickening is possible) or clear soups with dumplings such as momos.
- Vegetable slices.
- Pre-made salads with low-fat and low-salt dressing. Local yoghurts, curd and cottage cheese can replace commercial dressings.
- Whole-grain brown rice, whole-meal noodles and pasta.
- Fried rice, noodles or pasta with extra vegetables.
- Brown or whole-grain rice with accompanying curries, e.g. chickpea, lentil or mixed vegetable curry cooked with minimum fat/cream/ghee/coconut milk.
- Whole-meal or multigrain regional breads, roti or wraps can be offered.
- Fish is a better choice than meats. Use local varieties and local cooking methods that use less oil. Grilled, steamed, baked, boiled or broiled are preferred cooking methods for fish. Encourage the use of healthy marinades.
- Lean poultry can be prepared over red meats or processed meats and healthy cooking methods used. Add fruits, nuts and herbs in marinades and sauces.
- Local fresh fruits can be served without added sugar.

Dessert options would be to use thick fruit toppings on thin pastry or cake bases which can be lightly baked. Small amounts of cottage or low-fat cheeses or spreads may be used. Low-fat or no-fat yoghurt and fruit yoghurt also serve as viable options.
References


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