EAT WELL POLICY

January 2023
As university caterers we know we have a significant role to play in the food chain both as procurers and providers of food. We recognise our responsibility to provide healthy and sustainable food to our customers. We promote healthy and sustainable practices in all aspects of our food sourcing, production and service whilst taking account of our diverse, international and financially challenged customer base. Our menus are designed around the NHS Eat Well Guide to ensure our students and staff get a balance of healthier, more sustainable food. The NHS Eat Well Guide is displayed in our restaurants to encourage our students and staff to make informed decisions about what they eat. In December 2021, we achieved Food for the Brain Catering Accreditation. This accreditation recognises our high standards of nutritional excellence, our commitment to providing nutritionally balanced food, and the culture we have developed around nutrition awareness.

All the nutritional and allergen information on our menus is available to our customers via our online portal.

- **Stay hydrated**
  - **WHY?** Our bodies are about 60% water and it performs a crucial role in carrying nutrients to cells, helping to remove waste products from our major organs and helping to regulate our body's temperature. Water affects how our bodies and brain function; studies show that dehydration can reduce our ability to concentrate, our cognitive and physical performance and increase feelings of aggression or irritation. Water is essential for getting the benefits from fibre (below).

- **We have joined the Refill Revolution**, ensuring our customers can find locations where they can refill through the Refill app
- **We will ensure at least 25% of the drinks offered in our outlets do not contain artificial preservatives**
- **We have water available in all of our outlets free of charge.**

- **Eat a range of fruit and vegetables a day**
  - **WHY?** Fruit and vegetables are high in fibre, low in fat and contain a wide range of vitamins and minerals. The more varied a diet the more likely it is that we get a full range of vitamins and minerals essential to effective body and brain function. The health benefits of these vitamins and minerals are thought to deliver a wide range of health benefits including supporting the immune system (vitamin C), combatting stress and anxiety, relieving insomnia (magnesium) and relieving mood swings (Vitamin B). The fibre in fruit and vegetables help support dietary health as given below.

- **We actively promote a seasonal fruit and/or vegetable of the month**
- **We have fresh fruit available in all outlets**
- **We have a fresh juice bar and fruit “shots” available in our Hub Dining Hall**
• **Increase consumption of fibre**
  o **WHY?** Fibre not only helps support dietary health but also helps your body moderate blood sugar levels which support consistent energy levels and reduce mood swings. Fibre “feeds” gut bacteria; gut health is being increasing seen as beneficial in reducing the symptoms of anxiety and depressive disorders, but research in this area is in the early stages.
    ▪ We offer whole wheat pasta and brown rice as alternatives to white pasta and rice in our dining halls
    ▪ We have increased the ratio of wholemeal and seeded breads to white bread available at our bread stations
    ▪ We have created recipes with more vegetable and pulse content to increase fibre intake
    ▪ We have increased the selection of vegetables from 2 to 3 per service and we promote high fibre vegetables daily with an Eat Well logo
    ▪ All “Eat Well” dishes are highlighted on our menus

• **Reduce red meat**
  o **WHY?** While red meat is a great source of iron and vitamin B12 both essential for healthy blood and nervous system, too much of it can lead to high consumption of saturated fat, elevated cholesterol and digestive complaints. Red meat is a good source of tryptophan, an amino acid that is believed to be a precursor to mood-regulating neurotransmitter serotonin, which helps keep moods and sleep well balanced.
    ▪ We have vegetarian and vegan options available in all outlets
    ▪ We have reduced the amount of red meat served in our dining halls by 13% in the last 3 years
    ▪ We only have beef/pork on the menu three times a week in our dining halls
    ▪ We have reduced beef burgers on our daily menus to three times a week
    ▪ We have introduced more pulses and beans into recipes as a substitute to meat to offer an alternative source of protein
    ▪ We have increased our offering of fish to 3 times a week in our dining halls in line with our [Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) accreditation](#)
    ▪ Our street food van has been accredited by the [Vegetarian Society](#) and serves a choice of plant-based Moving Mountains burgers, vegetarian toasted sandwiches and vegan soup every week day.

• **Reduce consumption of sugar**
  o **WHY?** Sugar is in many of the foods we eat and is often hidden; it is also in many of the foods that are eaten as treats. Sugar is a source of instant energy but is also a source of energy “crashes” and cravings. Sugar can release positive feelings in the short term but has also been linked to lack of
energy, mood swings, and depression. This is thought to be because it decreases the effects of feel-good neurotransmitters, such as lower levels of serotonin accessing the brain.

- **We have reviewed our breakfast cereals and have increased our wholegrain cereal offer in line with the [Eat Well guidelines](#) regarding wholegrain**
- **We no longer purchase tinned fruit in syrup and have replaced it with tinned fruit in juice**
- **25% of the drinks we offer have no added**

**Reduce consumption of salt**
- **WHY?** Eating salt makes your body hold onto water which will increase blood pressure. This increase in blood pressure puts a strain on heart, liver, kidneys and brain function.
  - **We have reduced salt and increased our use of alternative seasoning including fresh herbs, black pepper, stock, garlic, ginger, chilli and lime**
  - **We have replaced canned products with low salt alternatives eg baked beans**
  - **We use low salt stock cubes**

**Reduce consumption of alcohol**
- **WHY?** The negative effects of over imbibing are obvious but alcohol in smaller amounts can also have a negative impact. Alcohol affects sleep patterns leading to feeling tired and sluggish despite sleeping. It also adds to sugar intake, is a diuretic so reduces water and water borne vitamins and can induce migraines.
  - **We clearly indicate when alcohol is added to our cooking**
  - **We do not serve alcohol in our Kingswood Hall of residence**
  - **We run mocktail making masterclasses for our students**
  - **We offer alcohol free venues and have a range of non-alcoholic options including alcohol free beer and wine**
  - **In February 2022 [Alcohol Impact Accreditation](#).**

**Food allergies and intolerances**
- **WHY?** The number of people reporting food allergies and intolerances is increasing. As the effects of food are being researched more, there is greater awareness of the negative impact that some foods can have on some people. In serious cases, allergies can be life threatening but even food intolerances can impact health and mood. There are 14 foods that must be identified under allergy legislation but food intolerances may cover a much wider range of food. Common allergies and intolerances are gluten, dairy, nuts, caffeine, sulphites, fructose, yeast and food colourings. The impact will be individual but include anaphylaxis, itching, fatigue, stomach pains and headaches
• The allergen information in all of our dishes is available via our online portal
• A QR code directing our customers to our allergen portal is on display in all of our outlets
• Our staff are trained to offer advice and assist with allergen related enquiries
• Forms are completed for all customers with dietary requirements and these are made available to all outlet managers
• We ensure we have products that are free from major allergens in all outlets, including gluten free products.

• Allow yourself occasional treats
  o WHY? It can sometimes feel like there are no healthy foods. However, for most people (without allergies) there are no unhealthy foods, just an unhealthy diet. A healthy diet is about balance, the wider the range of foods you eat, the more likely you will get the range of proteins, vitamins, minerals and carbohydrates your body and brain need to function. Also, food should be enjoyable and including treats in your diet will add to the balance and help reduce stress.

Additionally, we have introduced the following initiatives:

• We have added an “Eat Well” dish to our daily menus, which is easily identifiable by our Eat Well logo
• We have introduced new kitchen software which enables our customers to obtain allergen and nutritional information via our online portal
• We have reduced the consumption of fats by removing butter on vegetables and new potatoes