

Healthy Beverages in the Healthcare Workplace: Going Beyond Chronic Care

By Tami Frank, Program Coordinator, Partnership for a Healthy Lincoln (HealthyLincoln.org)

Hospitals have a role in prevention as well as chronic care. Two initiatives piloted in Lincoln hospitals have been shown to be successful in raising awareness and affecting real change. Interestingly, both have to do with healthy beverages. The first focuses on reducing sugar-sweetened beverage consumption and the second on promoting the ultimate healthy beverage for infants – breastmilk.

Why Focus on Beverages

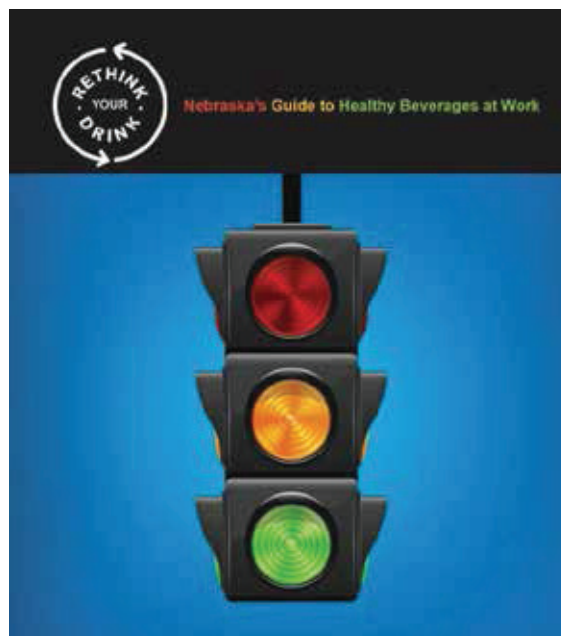
Interested in a \$27,000 cost savings?...hold that thought for later. Pop, energy drinks, sports drinks, sweetened tea, sweetened coffee drinks, juice drinks and even too much fruit juice are the #1 source of added sugar in the American diet. Lots of factors play a role in obesity. However, in attempts to improve the health of patients, families and staff, it is difficult to ignore that nearly 50% of all added sugars come from sugar-sweetened beverages. Let's do a bit of math: One 20 ounce pop has 240 calories. One 20 ounce pop a day equals 87,600 calories in a year or about 25 lbs. And you can buy these beverages everywhere - as part of a standard meal option at restaurants, in vending machines at work, school and maybe church, even in the check-out line at the copy shop.

What are Healthy Beverages

With so many beverage options available and companies attempting to market their product in the healthiest light to fit the current trend, it's hard to know what drinks are actually "healthy". Luckily, Nebraska's "Rethink Your Drink" campaign kit provides an easy-to-understand stoplight approach to help people identify healthy beverage options and make informed decisions.

Driving Change in the Workplace

Education on its own does not affect behavioral change. It's also important to make the healthy choice, the easy choice. Recently, Partnership for a Healthy Lincoln, in collaboration with the 3 worksite wellness councils across the state and the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services released **Nebraska's Guide to Healthy Beverages at Work**. Following the Rethink Your Drink stoplight approach, the guide offers evidenced based steps to developing a healthy beverage policy in your workplace utilizing a staged approach to change at a pace designated by your organization. The brief guide is full of tools and resources to help organizations improve the culture of wellness in their organization. Download a copy of the guide at www.healthylincoln.org.



Breastmilk - the Ultimate Healthy Beverage

We can't talk about healthy beverages without acknowledging breastmilk as the original healthy beverage for infants. The 2012 PRAMS data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicates nearly 90% of moms in Nebraska initiate breastfeeding. However, under half continue to breastfeed past 4 months. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends exclusive breastfeeding until 6 months and continued breastfeeding for the first year. In a study published by AAP, the most common factors mothers cited for discontinuing to breastfeed were:

- Lack of encouragement or education from their doctor
- Lack of confidence in their ability to breastfeed
- Challenges when returning to work/school

Policies, systems and environmental change are needed to support breastfeeding moms in our culture as well. Hospitals can evaluate their policies and practices on uninterrupted skin to skin time for the first hour of baby's life, not supplement with formula unless medically indicated, and provide adequate lactation support services giving new moms the tools they need to succeed. Find out how both Lincoln hospitals worked together to support breastfeeding moms in Lancaster County at:

<http://www.healthylincoln.org/initiatives/breastfeeding.html>.

And the \$27,000? One of Lincoln's hospitals signed on to the "Rethink Your Drink" campaign and discontinued providing free sugar sweetened beverages to their staff, patients and their families on each floor...\$27,000 is the amount they saved in the first year while "walking the talk" to create a healthy environment for all they serve.

About the Author: Tami Frank is program coordinator for Partnership for a Healthy Lincoln (HealthyLincoln.org), a non-profit organization dedicated to improving community health by decreasing obesity and increasing fitness. Ms. Frank also serves as project director for the Lincoln Community Breastfeeding Initiative.