

MAKING THE SMART CHOICE IN ARIZONA RESTAURANTS

Healthy menu options give residents a choice when eating out

Public Health Problem

- Obesity in Arizona has more than doubled since 1990.
- The nutrition environment, including widespread availability of fast food, vending machine and convenience store food and lack of access to fruits and vegetables is a contributing factor to the overweight and obesity epidemic.
- When an important nutritional labeling bill was not enacted by the Arizona legislature, concerned state Senator Amanda Aguirre convened a working group of community, health and restaurant leaders to develop an alternative initiative to support restaurants in offering healthier food choices and to help consumers identify these healthier options.

Program

- The Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Program at the Arizona Department of Health Services developed and launched *Arizona Smart Choice*, a restaurant initiative featuring menu items that contain whole grains, beans, fruits or vegetables and reduced levels of calories, fat and sodium. Details at: www.azsmartchoice.com.
- Any restaurant can participate in this voluntary initiative just by paying the cost of nutrition analysis of their submitted recipes by a qualified company and meeting initiative guidelines.
- Window decals identify participating restaurants and menu stickers mark the items meeting initiative guidelines. A participation packet provides guidance and marketing materials such as a brochure, decals and stickers and an implementation guide.
- Quality assurance and technical assistance is provided by health department staff.
- Participating restaurants include McDonald's, the Carlos O'Brien's restaurants and Tom's Tavern and Restaurant. There is currently a pilot program in one cafeteria in the Capitol area and plans for a pilot testing of vending machines featuring healthier choices in two government agency buildings.

Impact

Arizona Smart choice is helping to create a healthier food environment in the state by:

- Enrolling restaurants serving residents across the state, including fast food restaurants
- Increasing the number of participating restaurants in this health-promoting initiative including some that are now initiating the process to join.
- Expanding the initiative, via pilot projects, into additional state agency cafeterias and vending machine outlets.

Contact

Marie Tymrak

Arizona Department of Health Services

602-542-2827

tymrakm@azdhs.gov