

RESTAURANT PROGRAM OFFERS HEALTHY CHOICES TO DINERS

Access to help from a nutrition professional makes restaurant participation easier

Public Health Problem

- Americans spend about half their food dollar on food prepared outside their homes in restaurants and take-out sites.
- Restaurant meals are often high in calories and fat because of preparation methods, ingredients and the large portions offered.
- Studies link eating out with obesity which raises the risk of developing a chronic disease such as diabetes and heart disease.

Program

- The Healthy Choices Restaurant Program, funded by Steps to a Healthier Hillsborough County in Florida, helps consumers identify local restaurants that offer sensible menu choices.
- Three program themes related to making healthy restaurant choices - *Take ½ Home*, *Cook to Order* and *Healthier Substitutions*- guide diners at restaurants in the Tampa Bay area toward reducing calories and improving the nutritional content of the foods they choose.
- Participating restaurants display the Program logo to show support for their customers' choice to eat in a healthier way. They also agree to promote the three themes in their restaurant by adjusting their preparation methods and providing take-home packaging.
- The Program is promoted through a website, billboards, radio and TV segments, local movie theaters and local newspaper articles.
- Participating restaurants have access to assistance from a registered dietitian in Steps to a Healthier Hillsborough County for advice on how to implement this initiative in their restaurant.

Impact

- Thirteen restaurants are already enrolled and recruitment for more is ongoing. This health-promoting initiative is similar to an effort begun in Pinellas County where over 250 restaurants participate.
- This program is increasing awareness among restaurant operators that customers desire, and will order, healthier menu options.
- Providing the services of a registered dietitian to enhance the nutritional value of prepared menu selections is a plus for the program and ensures that menu changes are actually improving the menu choices.

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