

FAMILIES EATING HEALTHIER AT LONG ISLAND RESTAURANTS

New menu offerings teach patrons about healthy choices for preventing chronic disease

Public Health Problem

- Diets high in calories, saturated fat, and sodium raise the risk of developing chronic diseases such as heart disease and diabetes.
- When adults and children eat out they tend to eat more fat, calories and sodium, drink less milk, and eat fewer fruits and vegetables than when eating at home.
- Americans spend almost half their food dollars on food eaten away from home.

Program

- The Just Ask Us! Restaurant program, funded by the New York State Healthy Heart Program, promotes healthier choices at Long Island restaurants.
- Participating restaurants offer healthier options on adult and children's menus
- The restaurant program is promoted by a Web site directed at parents and by local schools. Suffolk County Libraries supply Just Ask Us! restaurant brochures to the community.
- During the first annual "Eating Well Restaurant Week" restaurants promoted at least one healthier meal special and received beneficial local publicity while a number of political leaders supported the effort.
- Forty-seven restaurants participate in the program which reaches an estimated 4700 residents a day.

Impact

- Restaurants report:
 - An eighteen percent increase in customers ordering healthier choices
 - Customers requesting healthy changes to regular menu items
 - More parents asking for healthy choices for their children's meals;
 - More restaurants offering juice or low-fat milk on kids menus instead of soda "Our kids' meals come with ... apple juice or low-fat chocolate milk. We don't even ask if they want soda," says Drew Streeff from Hartlin Inn.
- Restaurateurs have learned that healthy items will sell and patrons are now aware that they can ask for healthier changes at any restaurant

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