

# Philadelphia Hospitals Offer Healthier Options with Good Food, Healthy Hospitals

Catherine Bartoli

## At A Glance

The Good Food, Healthy Hospitals (GFHH) initiative works with hospitals to promote healthy foods and beverages for patients, staff, and visitors. The Philadelphia Department of Public Health (PDPH), The Common Market (a non-profit working to improve food access to vulnerable populations), and American Heart Association worked with 15 hospitals to meet food and beverage guidelines that support the GFHH Food, Beverage, and Procurement Standards. Some hospitals saw increased sales of healthy items promoted by GFHH in their first year.



## Public Health Challenge

Among large US cities, Philadelphia has some of the highest rates of poverty and diet-related chronic diseases, including hypertension, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease. These diseases are costly and largely avoidable. Research shows that improving dietary intake can lower chronic disease risk. For hospital patients already suffering from lifestyle-related diseases, improving dietary intake can help with chronic disease management. Many Philadelphia hospitals

serve low-income neighborhoods where few fresh and healthy food options are available for residents.

## Find Out More

GFHH is open to all hospitals in Philadelphia. To learn more, visit <http://foodfitphilly.org/good-food-healthy-hospitals/>.

You can view the Healthy Hospitals Food, Beverage, and Procurement Standards and supporting guidelines at [http://foodfitphilly.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/GFHH\\_nutritionstandards.pdf](http://foodfitphilly.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/GFHH_nutritionstandards.pdf).

This project is supported by the Diabetes Prevention - State and Local Public Health Actions to Prevent Obesity, Diabetes, and Heart Disease and Stroke cooperative agreement (DP14-1422).

*Good Food Healthy Hospitals has been instrumental in making changes to help employees purchase more water and seltzer in vending machines and the cafeteria.*  
- Adeena Menasha

## Contact

### Catherine Bartoli

Philadelphia  
Department of Public  
Health  
1101 Market St.,  
9th floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19107  
Phone: 215-685-5281

Fax: 215-685-5666

## Approach

In 2014, PDPH teamed up with The Common Market, and the American Heart Association to launch GFHH, an initiative to transform Philadelphia's hospital food environments. GFHH invites hospitals to adopt five food standards across five hospital food environments: purchased foods and beverages, cafeteria meals, patient meals, catering, and vending machine operations. These standards include multiple guidelines—for example, no deep frying is a guideline within the patient meal standard. Hospitals commit to meeting at least 65% of the guidelines of one standard in their first year. The GFHH project team provides technical assistance and resources to support their efforts.

## Results

As of June 2017, 15 hospitals signed the pledge to adopt GFHH. Half of these met the minimum guidelines for multiple standards. In the first year of implementation, six achieved the standard for patient meals, four for purchased food and beverages, three for cafeteria meals, and two for catered meals. Two hospitals reported increased sales of healthy items from changes made in their cafeterias. For example, Temple University Hospital replaced the panini station with a made-to-order salad station in addition to its salad bar. During its first month, sales at the new station were over 5 times what they were in the same space the previous year. Einstein Medical Center's cafeteria reported an 83% increase in sales for unsweetened seltzer waters compared to the previous year, after implementing a guideline to reduce prices for these products.

## What's Next

The GFHH team engages hospital staff from food service, purchasing, clinical, wellness, and administrative departments to create a cross-disciplinary approach to providing healthier food and beverage options. As GFHH standards become a part of hospital culture, staff will sustain the work by helping develop hospital policies around food and beverage options. As the project enters into its 4th and final grant year, the project team will continue to work with each site to further engage key stakeholders to sustain healthy food and beverage environments.