

CREATETM

HEALTHY CHOICES

Retail Settings Toolkit



Increasing visibility of healthy choices
at Utah's small food stores

Extension
UtahStateUniversity.



CREATE^{SNAP-ED}
BETTER HEALTH.

Table of contents

Table of contents.....	2
Welcome & Project Goals	3
Promoting Nutrition at the Store: Why does it Matter?	4
Identifying Target Stores.....	4
Store Manager Interview	5
Store Observation Tool	5
Defining Healthy Foods.....	6
Marketing Tools	8
Shelf Talkers	8
Posters	9
Shelf Educators	9
Recipe Cards	10
Recipe websites	10
Healthy Changes to the Retail Setting	10
Promotion	11
Placement	11
Product.....	12
Recipe Sampling.....	12
Prepackaged Recipe Bags	12
Contact information	13

Welcome & Project Goals

Welcome to the *Thumbs Up for Healthy Choices* Toolkit! In this toolkit, you will find the information needed to successfully implement this project in a retail setting such as small corner stores, or grocers. The goals of the project are simple: to make healthier choices more available and visible to people purchasing food at small stores. We hope that *Thumbs Up for Healthy Choices* will make it easier for people to make healthier choices. The *Thumbs Up* signs will be placed in front of food items that fit specific nutrition guidelines, which are defined in this toolkit, for a healthy choice. These foods include items that are high in fiber, vitamins, and minerals, and low in added sugar, sodium, and saturated and trans-fats. The healthy choice guidelines are based on the “Foods 2 Encourage” program developed by Feeding America, as well as the current Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

In addition to the toolkit, the program includes shelf talkers, shelf educators, posters and recipes cards. All the materials can be adapted to a variety of retail settings. We encourage you to explore what options will work best for the store and its customers. You can use all of the tools, or some of the tools available, whatever works best for the store’s needs. Throughout the toolkit you will find tips on how to use each piece of the project in different settings. You can order additional materials, as needed, through the Create Better Health state office order form on the staff website.

Thumbs Up for Healthy Choices was developed by the Utah Create Better Health (SNAP-Ed) program. Implementation of the program is supported by the Create Better Health Nutrition Education Assistants (Ambassadors) and the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) Health Educators. Contact information for these organizations can be found at the end of this toolkit.

We hope you are as excited about this project as we are. Research has indicated that nudges, like the *Thumbs Up* shelf talkers and educators, are effective at encouraging people to make healthier choices in a variety of retail settings. We hope that our work can help Utahns make healthier choices that improve their quality of life.

Happy Nudging!

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Promoting Nutrition at the Store: Why does it Matter?

Many people across the nation do the majority of their grocery shopping in small corner stores or grocers. Historically, corner stores were places where people would pick up a few items between trips to larger grocers. However, it has become more common for many people, including children and teenagers, who do not have easy access to larger stores. Hence, they turn to smaller neighborhood stores for the majority of their food. This greater reliance on corner stores makes it essential that customers have access to healthy choices that are both appealing and visible. The shelf-talkers, educators, and recipes are great ways to let customers know which foods will help them and their families improve their health through nutrition.

By no means is *Thumbs Up* intended to decrease the number of foods that do not fit the healthy choice criteria outlined in this toolkit. It does not intend to shame people for purchasing those options at your store. Instead, *Thumbs Up* makes the healthy choice, the easy choice for those customers who make nutritious food a priority.

We are hopeful that this program and toolkit will benefit both the store and its customers. The *Thumbs Up for Healthy Choices* program aims to make healthier choices easier for Utahns to make. We hope that customers will recognize that the store cares about them and their families' wellness by implementing the program. Implementing the program may also help improve the sale of foods targeted with the *Thumbs Up* materials.

Identifying Target Stores

As Utah's SNAP-Ed program, Create Better Health is required to focus our efforts on locations where our target population shop, live, eat, play, work, or learn. Our target population includes low-income individuals and families who receive or are eligible for SNAP benefits. Therefore, stores that receive our *Thumbs Up for Healthy Choices* interventions must accept SNAP benefits. If they are a larger grocery store, such as Smith's or an Associated Food Store, there is an additional federal requirement that the store redeems at least \$50,000 in SNAP benefits monthly. You can find which stores meet this criterion in your county's eligibility packet available on 'Box.'

However, it is unlikely that small corner stores or even small grocers in some rural areas have the population or sales to support that high level of SNAP redemption. These stores may still be able to receive programming from SNAP-Ed. To qualify for our programming, they must accept SNAP benefits and be located within our population shops. Determining this will be on a case-by-case basis and needs approval from the state office before implementation. It is recommended that you identify a few stores that you would like to approach, contact the state office with the store's name and location. The state team will discuss the locations with you and decide if they are appropriate to receive SNAP-Ed programming.

Finally, please take into consideration the amount of time you can dedicate to the store's program. This intervention is best designed for small corner stores as their inventory is relatively small and likely manageable by 1-2 Ambassadors. Starting a new program in a store whose sales and interest in promoting healthy choices depend directly on your work is a big undertaking. If you do not feel like you can meet 100% of the store's needs at the beginning of the process, please do not embark on this strategy. One store's bad experience can result in a bad reputation for the program, making it challenging to entice others to try it out.

Store Manager Interview

Identifying a store that you feel would benefit from the *Thumbs Up for Healthy Choices* program is just one piece of the puzzle. It is essential that the store owner and/or manager values offering their consumers healthy food choices *and* wants Create Better Health help in providing this service. This will likely be the hardest part of the puzzle since most owners and managers are likely, and understandably, most concerned with the bottom line. But, the good news is that these types of interventions have shown to be beneficial for store's sales in other areas of the country.

The best way to approach a store manager is to talk to them about promoting things they are already doing to make healthy choices available to their customers. You can do this by implementing any of the ideas under the promotion section (pg. 10) in this toolkit. Promotion strategies include using the *Thumbs Up* shelf talkers or educators to identify healthy items within the store. Or, you could have a nutrition education booth that features a healthy recipe that uses ingredients available in the store. Customers could learn about why the recipe is healthy, taste how good it is, and then purchase all the ingredients they need to make it right in the store. If the store owner is open to it, you could even prepackage all of the ingredients in a bag with the recipe card so it is easier for the customers to get what they need. Pitching these types of ideas to a store owner/manager, rather than all of the things you would like to change about the store, will likely result in a more positive response. Once you have established a trusting relationship with the owner it is appropriate to talk about the strategies in the product and placement sections of this toolkit.

Once you identify a store that is approved by the state office, and you have the support of the store owner or manager, use the store manager interview to get a better sense of what the manager would like to try in their store. You can find the store manager interview on the staff website, under the PSE tab. The survey is a brief tool to help you identify the store's interests, barriers, and facilitators to implementing a successful *Thumbs Up for Healthy Choices* program.

Store Observation Tool

Once you have your foot in the door at a store, and have conducted your store manager interview, it is time to complete the Store Observation Form. This form will help you assess what the store currently stocks and promotes, as well as areas for improvement. Conduct this

assessment when you begin to work with the store, as well as at the end of the fiscal year (or when you complete your work with the store). Your goal should be to see an improvement in any of the questions asked on the form. You can record your results from the form in PEARS under a PSE activity for that retail setting.

Defining Healthy Foods

Determining which foods are “healthy” can be an overwhelming and frustrating task for consumers. *Thumbs Up for Healthy Choices* is designed to make nutritious foods stand out among the rest. Below you will find the requirements for different food categories to get a *Thumbs Up* sign. Foods must meet all of the requirements to be deemed a “healthy choice.” Meeting all requirements ensures that the program is consistent at all locations. It is likely you will encounter different products than those listed below. You may use the criteria for an item that is most similar to the product. But, if you are unsure about an item, it is best to not mark it with a *Thumbs Up*.

The below criteria are all based on a *per serving basis*. Information on nutrition fact labels are also on a per serving basis, so you should be able to compare these values to those on the food labels with relative ease. The criteria were adapted from Feeding America’s Detailed Foods to Encourage.

Category: Fruits and Vegetables	Criteria
Fresh fruits or vegetables	Nothing added
Fruit or vegetable juice	100% juice
Canned, dried, or frozen	No partially hydrogenated oils listed in ingredients AND Sodium \leq 230 mg AND Total sugar \leq 12 g OR packed in lite syrup OR 100% fruit juice AND Saturated fat \leq 2g Trans fat 0 g

Category: Grains	Criteria
Single grain products (oats, barley, rice, quinoa, etc.)	100% whole grain
Bread & pasta (whole grain)	Whole grain listed as the first ingredient AND >10% DV fiber OR \geq 2.5 g fiber
Cereal	Whole grain listed as the first ingredient AND >3g fiber

Bread, pasta, & cereal (not whole grain)	Does not have to be whole grain, but does have Sodium \leq 230 mg Total sugar Bread/pasta 0 g Cereal $<$ 12 g Saturated fat \leq 2g Trans fat 0 g
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Category: Protein	Criteria
Eggs	No special criteria
Nuts, seeds, dried beans, lentils	Nothing added
Beans, meat, poultry, seafood (canned chicken, tuna, beans, frozen hamburger patties, frozen chicken nuggets, etc.)	Sodium \leq 480 mg/serving Saturated fat \leq 2g Trans fat 0 g
Nuts/seed spreads (peanut butter, almond butter, soy butter, etc.)	Sodium \leq 230 mg/serving Total sugar $<$ 4 g per tablespoon or per 1 oz Trans fat 0 g

Category: Dairy	Criteria
Unflavored/unsweetened low-fat (1%) or skim/non-fat milk or yogurt	No special criteria
Unsweetened milk substitutes (soymilk, almond milk, etc.)	No special criteria
Cheese	Sodium \leq 480 mg/serving Saturated fat \leq 3g Trans fat 0 g
Flavored milk, milk substitutes, & yogurt	Can be skim, low-fat, or full fat Sodium \leq 480 mg Total sugar: Milk \leq 22 g Yogurt \leq 30 g Saturated fat \leq 3g Trans fat 0 g

Category: Snack Foods	Criteria
Granola/Protein Bars Trail Mix Cookies Pastries/Brownies Etc.	≤ 200 calories per serving ≤ 7 grams of total fat per serving ≤ 2 grams of saturated fat per serving ≤ 15 grams of sugar per serving ≤ 200 mg. of per serving Do not have sugar or high fructose corn syrup listed as the first ingredient
Nuts (not trail mix, see above for trail mix)	≤ 220 calories per serving ≤ 3.5 g. saturated fat ≤ 240 mg of sodium per serving ≤ 4 g total sugar
Crackers Pretzels Rice Cakes Etc.	≤ 150 calories per serving ≤ 1.5 grams saturated fat per serving ≤ 230 mg. of sodium per serving ≤ 10 grams total sugar

Marketing Tools

Below are a variety of marketing tools available to help you promote healthy choices throughout the store. The tools can either be printed directly from the staff website, or ordered through the order supply form.

Shelf Talkers



Shelf talkers are a marketing tool used to direct a consumer’s attention to a specific product. They are generally small signs, like the ones above, that are placed on shelves in front of certain items. Shelf talkers have proven to be effective at increasing the likelihood that a consumer will purchase the item they are promoting. Many food retail settings use these tools to increase the sale of certain items. We are hopeful our *Thumbs Up* shelf talkers will have the same impact on the selection of healthy items at your store.

There are three different sized shelf talkers available. Currently, there are 4” signs, 2” signs, and 1x3” strip signs. They are available in English and Spanish. You may order the size that works best for your store. You can order these materials through the supply order form on the staff

website. Since each store is so different, there is not one recommended way to attach the shelf talkers to your shelving, but below you will find some ideas on how to attach them. We do have some shelf clips available to order on the staff website.

Some stores find it easier to designate certain shelves or areas of the store for healthy choices. You can use the nutrition guidelines, or teach the store staff how to use the guidelines to fill these shelves with appropriate foods. This separation of healthy items can greatly reduce the amount of time spent moving the *Thumbs Up* signs around the store.

Try one of the ideas below, or get creative to attach your shelf talkers *neatly and visibly* to a shelf:

- Punch 1-2 holes in the shelf talker. Use a zip-tie, twist tie, or twine to attach to metal shelving.
- Roll duct tape on the back on shelf talker and tape to wooden or plastic shelving.
- Use a binder clip to attach to thin plastic or metal shelving

Posters

The posters received as part of the toolkit are intended to give people more information about the foods that have been deemed a “healthy choice.” It doesn’t give all of the details of how healthy foods are determined since too much nutrition information can often be overwhelming. You can order additional posters as needed. The posters are available in English and Spanish.

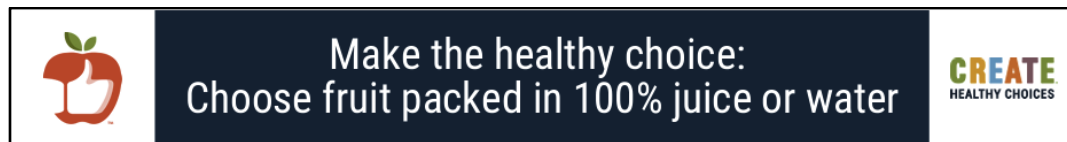
New posters are currently being developed that can be used to advertise that the store is participating in the *Thumbs Up Healthy Stores* program. Once available, you can order these posters from the staff order form.



Shelf Educators

Shelf educators highlight some of the most common healthy choices available at small corner stores. You can print and laminate shelf educators on the top row below. You can order the strips from the supply order from available on the staff website. Place either of these educators on the shelf in front of the product they are highlighting. Since these have the *Thumbs Up*

symbols, feel free to use these in place of the *Thumbs Up* shelf talkers if you think the customers would appreciate the information. If you need a shelf educator for a product not already included on the website, please contact the state office. We would like the educators to be consistent around the state, so prefer Ambassadors to not create them at the county level.



Recipe Cards

One of the biggest barriers to choosing some of the healthy choices is not knowing what to do with them. Sharing simple, easy, healthy recipes with customers will greatly increase the likelihood that they will choose and use the *Thumbs Up* item. Be sure to mark the ingredients needed for the recipe with the *Thumbs Up* sign within the store so customers know which items to select. You can find many simple, tasty, healthy recipe ideas on the following websites:

Recipe websites

<https://extension.usu.edu/fscreate/nea-resources>

<https://createbetterhealth.org/>

<https://www.pinterest.com/createbetterhealthutah/>

Healthy Changes to the Retail Setting

Making changes in a store setting can involve a wide variety of strategies. Below you will find a variety of ideas that have been adapted from New York City's Adopt-a-Shop toolkit. The strategies pertain to the placement, promotion, and stocking of healthy products. Remember that all of the strategies below should be used to encourage consumers to purchase items that fit the nutrition guidelines outlined in this toolkit. You do not have to implement all of the

strategies. Work with your store manager and customers to find the right combination of strategies to try in your local store.

Promotion

Below are some ideas to help promote the healthy options the store already offers. It is recommended that you approach your work with a store pitching one or more of the following strategies.

- Promote healthy foods and beverages using *Thumbs Up* signage on shelves and refrigerators.
- Remove unhealthy food advertising from the entry door and store. Replace with *Thumbs Up* or MyPlate posters.
- Offer recipes for healthy products throughout the store. Place recipes close to the foods they utilize.
 - If possible, create prepackaged bags that contain all the necessary ingredients and the recipe to make a healthy meal.
- Promote only water and low-calorie beverages in circulars and other in-store advertising, instead of high-calorie drinks.
- Schedule weekly or monthly recipe samples and nutrition education booth in the store. Reach out to local media outlets (radio stations, newspapers, etc.) to advertise the day SNAP-Ed programming will be available at the store.

Price

Below are some ideas to help make the healthy options more affordable that you could recommend to the store.

- Offer deals like buy two, get one free or other special prices for healthy items.
- Have store coupons for produce.

Placement

Below are some ideas about where/how to display healthy foods to increase the visibility of the items. These strategies are known to increase the purchase of foods within retail settings.

- Offer fruits and vegetables at the front of the store or at the checkout. Offer ready to eat fruits or vegetables, such as bananas, oranges and/or washed apples right at the register.
- For supermarkets, create and maintain a healthy checkout aisle that stocks only healthy foods and drinks and/or nonfood items like magazines or household items. Placing produce and other healthy products in high visibility areas and at a checkout increases impulse purchases of these healthy items.
- Display water and low-calorie drinks at eye-level.
- Move sugary cereals to the top shelves, so they are out of the eye level of children.
- Place whole grains at eye level shelving throughout the store.

- Create a healthy end-cap (a display at the end of an aisle) and other special displays; only promote water and low-calorie beverages.

Product

- Ask customers what type of products they would like to see in the store! Place a large chalk or dry-erase board in a visible area and ask customers to write down what they would like to see stocked. This is a great way to get customer involvement.
- Stock low-sodium canned goods and canned fruit in 100% juice.
 - Most of the salt and sugar we eat comes from packaged, processed and store-bought food. The majority of stores already stock canned goods, so it makes sense to provide a healthier alternative to existing items. Low-sodium or low-added sugar products often do not cost any more.
- Stock at least two healthy snacks.
 - Children frequently shop at corner stores near their schools. Stocking healthier alternatives helps kids (and adults) make better choices.
- In supermarkets, improve the produce section.
 - Train retailers on how to best procure, handle and display produce to keep its quality high.
- Stock grab and go fruit and vegetable snacks (ie: cut up fruit in containers, vegetable sticks with low-fat dips), bagged salads, or meal packs (such as soup kits that include an assortment of vegetables).
- Stock 100% whole grains, such as 100% whole wheat bread, brown rice, whole wheat pasta, oatmeal.
- Stock only smaller (not more than 16 ounces) bottles/cans of sugary drinks in refrigerator cases (including fruit drinks, sports drinks, and energy drinks).

Recipe Sampling

As mentioned above in the promotion section, having a physical presence at the store to promote the new marketing strategies and/or new healthy foods that are available will be essential to a successful store intervention. It is recommended that you set up a regular schedule to have a nutrition education booth at the store. For example, let customers know that Create Better Health will be at the store every other Saturday will great nutrition education and a delicious recipe sample. The booth can provide information to the consumers about how to make healthy choices, as well as an explanation of the Thumbs Up program. If time and budget allow, preparing a sample or doing a recipe demonstration at the store will also likely increase the sale of the item(s) being featured.

Prepackaged Recipe Bags

Another option that some Ambassadors have used to help increase the selection of healthy foods is to pre-package bags with ingredients needed to make a healthy Create Better Health

recipe. You can order strong, clear bags from the staff order form for this strategy. Be sure to feature recipes that have only ingredients that are available right in the store.

Contact information

Create Better Health (SNAP-Ed) and Health Department Educators Contact Information

Many local health department educators are required to do similar PSE work as an Ambassador. If you need additional help or support in implementing Thumbs Up for Healthy Choices in either food pantries or small retail settings, please reach out to the appropriate health department educator below. This is an especially great resource for our counties that have just one **Ambassador**.

County	Name	Organization	Contact Information
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1. **mail:**
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
2. **fax:**
(833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. **email:**
program.intake@usda.gov

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For further information regarding non-discrimination, please visit equity.usu.edu, or contact:

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