

Background

- Hearts Beat Back: The Heart of New Ulm Project (HONU) is a 10-year initiative to reduce heart attacks and coronary heart disease (CHD) in the rural community of New Ulm, Minn. A community screening in 2009 identified overweight and obesity as an important risk factor in New Ulm with 35% of the adults meeting the definition of overweight and 38% meeting the definition of obesity. Overweight/obesity is one of the nine modifiable risk factors for CHD that HONU is working to reduce in the community.
- While HONU is taking a multifaceted approach to reduce overweight/obesity in the community, one key community approach is to improve the nutrition environment, specifically the restaurant, convenience store and grocery store environments.
- The nutrition environment goal is to increase healthful food and beverage availability, access, affordability and promotion in New Ulm to increase heart-healthy food and beverage selections by consumers.
- This poster focuses on the program implemented at convenience stores, which included an assessment (using the Nutrition Environment Measures Survey for stores – NEMS-S)¹ and two consumer-directed campaigns to encourage healthier snack and beverage purchases. The campaign was launched initially in two large convenience stores and eventually in all five New Ulm convenience stores to encourage healthier food and beverage SWAPs for usual purchases.
- A trend report found that 52% of convenience store customers would like to see more healthful food items and 47% would like to see more healthful beverages available.²

Methods

- All five convenience stores were assessed in May 2010 with the NEMS-S.
- NEMS-S results reports were provided to each store.
- Two local convenience stores were recruited to participate in the initial SWAP IT snack campaign, which began in October 2010. The other stores did not have the healthy snacks available to participate.
- Five local convenience stores were recruited to participate in the second SWAP IT campaign, which focused on promoting lower-calorie drinks to lose weight and improve health and launched in February 2012.
- Consumer exit surveys were conducted during each campaign. Eighty-six surveys were conducted on two days at the two participating stores in August 2011 to measure results of the SWAP IT snack campaign. On one Friday in March and one Friday in April 2012, 152 surveys were conducted in 3 participating stores to measure the impact of the SWAP IT beverage campaign.

Baseline Findings

NEMS-S Findings: Healthy Food and Beverage Availability (n=5 convenience stores)

Healthy Item	Stores Offering Item (n)
Low-fat/skim milk	5
Fruit	3
Vegetables	1
Reduced-fat frozen dinners	2
Whole grain bread	1
Low-fat baked goods	1
Baked chips	4
Healthier cereals	3

The SWAP IT Campaigns

Snack SWAP Campaign

- Fourteen snacks were identified in each of the two participating stores as being healthier choices by meeting the following criteria: <300 calories, <12 gram fat, <3 grams saturated fat, and containing at least one of the following: > 2 grams fiber, > 5 or more grams protein or at least one half serving of fruits or vegetables. Snacks were identified and promoted through posters, brochures and wallet cards. Customers were asked to SWAP one identified snack for a usual snack to save calories and improve heart health.
- A kickoff event was held at each of the participating stores to draw attention to the campaign. Free fruit was provided to customers at the event.
- The campaign began in October 2010 and ran through January 2012.
- One-third of all customers were aware of the campaign and 36% of customers who purchased food or drink from the store reported seeing the campaign materials. Thirty-four percent of people who purchased food or drink purchased an item promoted through the campaign.
- Of the customers seeing the campaign materials, 45% indicated that the information influenced their purchase decision.



Beverage SWAP Campaign

- Campaign messages focused on reducing calories by SWAP-ing a healthier beverage for a regular purchase. Examples include: choosing water instead of sugary beverages, decreasing portion sizes, selecting lower-fat milk, and skipping sugar and creamer in coffee. Messages were promoted through front door clings, cooler clings and flyers throughout stores. Offsite promotions included a billboard, website promotion, newspaper articles, e-newsletter promotion and promotions at local events.
- The campaign launched in February 2012 and continues in stores today.
- Approximately, one-third of respondents indicated they buy beverages from convenience stores daily and another 38% reported purchasing them weekly.
- Thirty-nine percent of respondents reported seeing the campaign. Among those who bought beverages, 43% had seen the campaign.
- Those who reported seeing the campaign materials were more likely to purchase a beverage promoted by the SWAP campaign (55%) compared to those who did not see the materials (38%).
- Of those who had seen the campaign materials, 40% indicated they thought it had influenced their purchase on either this trip or another trip.



Local Participation and Support

Hearts Beat Back: The Heart of New Ulm Project is a collaborative partnership of Allina Health, the Minneapolis Heart Institute Foundation, the New Ulm Medical Center, and the community of New Ulm.

Participating convenience stores: Casey's, Clark, Freedom, Holiday and Kwik Trip.

Conclusions

- The NEMS-S assessment and personalized written summary report provided observational data to present to the store managers. The meeting created an opportunity to build relationships between HONU and store personnel and start a conversation about the importance of access, availability, affordability and promotion of healthful food and beverages to consumers.
- NEMS-S assessment results can be used to develop interventions designed to increase healthier food and beverage selections by consumers.
- Among customers who made store food and beverage purchases, those who saw the campaign materials were more likely to buy a Snack SWAP or Beverage SWAP item than those who did not. However, due to the low number of survey respondents, it is difficult to detect a true difference between those who made purchases and those who did not.
- Less than 40% of convenience store customers were aware of the campaign, creating an opportunity to investigate ways to improve the awareness of campaign messages. Although point-of-choice promotion and signage increased during the Beverage SWAP campaign, the convenience store environment is visually crowded, with a variety of messages and signage competing for customers' attention. Suggestions from survey respondents included putting signage in more obvious areas, such as near coffee machines, restrooms, store entrances or hot food areas.
- The SWAP IT campaign is one approach to market healthier choices to consumers. Although an association exists between seeing the campaign materials and better food and beverage selections, there is an opportunity to improve awareness of campaign messages. This program shows promise for the ability to work with convenience stores to improve the food environment and increase healthier food and beverage selections.

References

1. Glanz K, Sallis JF, Saelens BE, Frank LD. Nutrition Environment Measures Survey in Stores (NEMS-S): development and evaluation. Am J Prev Med 2007;32:282-289.
2. The Convenience Store Foodservice Consumer Trend Report Attitude and Usage Survey. Technomic 2010.

Acknowledgments

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