

Changing the Environment by Offering Healthy Restaurant Choices to Adults and Children



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BACKGROUND:

In 1970, Americans spent just 26% of their food dollars on meals prepared outside their homes. Today, that percentage has increased to more than 46%. Nationally, 127 million Americans are considered overweight. Numerous reports indicate that eating more fruits and vegetables decreases the incidence of many chronic diseases, including obesity. Additionally, consumers who regularly eat away from home consume fewer servings of fruits and vegetables each day. However, challenges exist when addressing obesity prevention by promoting healthy meal choices in restaurants. The Colorado Physical Activity and Nutrition Program developed the Smart Meal™ Seal, a unique restaurant intervention program, to respond to these issues.

Logo and brand development



Original



Previous



New

OBJECTIVES:

The purpose of the *Smart Meal™ Seal* program is to improve meal options in restaurants to improve the eating habits of individuals who frequently dine out and eat at fast food establishments. Marketing the availability of healthier options offered in eating establishments and changing the environment and policies, the *Smart Meal™ Seal* program addresses the individual, interpersonal, organizational, and community levels of the Social Ecologic Theoretical Framework. It should also be emphasized that the Smart Meal program was developed with a community setting in mind. COPAN's *Roadmap to Healthy Eating and Active Living* encourages every sector of a community to address obesity: breastfeeding, early childhood, schools, worksites, health care, policy development, active community environments, and food access with nutrition and physical activity messages and promotion throughout. It is within this type of community engagement that the *Smart Meal™ Seal* program has the most impact.

ELEMENTS OF THE PROGRAM

Seals: The program uses easily recognizable decals, referred to as “seals,” to identify options that meet the program’s nutritional requirements. The seals are prominently displayed on front entrance doors of *Smart Meal™ Seal* restaurants, and are placed on menus next to approved meal items.

Eligibility Criteria: In order to qualify for the program, restaurants and eating establishments must analyze and qualify at least two menu items or meals that meet the following requirements:

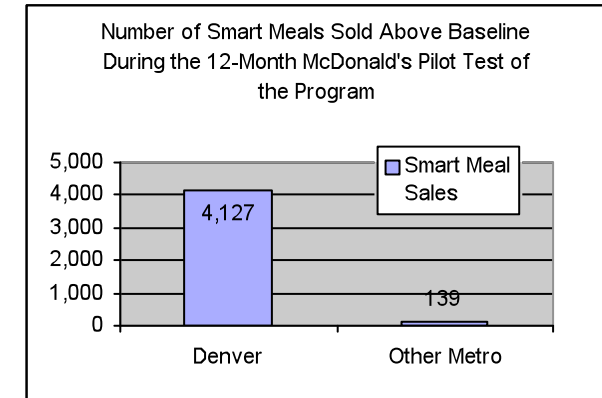
- Two or more servings of beans, whole grains, fruits or vegetables – one of which may be substituted with a serving of fat free or low fat milk or equivalent product
- No more than 700 calories
- No more than 30 percent of total calories from fat or 23 grams of total fat
- No more than 10 percent of calories from saturated fat or 8 grams of total fat
- No more than 0.5 grams of trans fat (no added or artificial trans fat)
- No more than 1500 milligrams of sodium (650 for a side dish)

New - Smart Meal for Kids guidelines launched in Spring of 2010

Make Any Happy Meal™
a Smart Meal for Kids!
Substitutes French Fries and Soda with
Apple Dippers and a Milk or Juice!



Training and Supplying Materials: The training component of the Smart Meal™ Seal program is two-pronged: restaurants, and organizations recruiting restaurants. All training and implementation materials are provided free of charge. **Qualitative Evaluation Data:** Observation checklists of compliance, and Manager/Owner interviews to understand the restaurant decision-makers. **Quantitative Evaluation Data:** From July 2007 to June 2008, 110 McDonald’s restaurants in metro Denver completed a twelve-month pilot test of the Smart Meal program. At the conclusion of the pilot, weekly aggregated totals of Smart Meal sales along with McDonald’s most popular meal items were provided to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) for evaluation. An identical set of sales data were provided to CDPHE for a second Colorado metro population with 34 McDonald’s stores not participating in the pilot. These data provided a valid and complete picture of sales trends over the 2.5-year period for tens of thousands of customers.



RESULTS and CONCLUSIONS

Currently there are over 200 Denver Metro and surrounding-area restaurant-locations participating in the Smart Meal™ program. A total of 1,630 Smart Meals are available to consumers each day in Colorado. Increasing the positive health impacts of restaurant food environments is critical to population health and reducing obesity. Promotion and marketing of healthy meals can positively influence customer choices. The Smart Meal Seal program recognizes restaurants willing to promote health messages, and to highlight specific healthy meals. Sustainable change in restaurants’ food environments depends on the engagement and commitment of the business infrastructure.

CURRENT PROGRESS:

During 2009-10, the Smart Meal program was evaluated by Macro International and Center TRT, resulting in the designation of a “practice based intervention,” and therefore, the support of CDC. With supportive funding from COPAN’s partner programs within the state health department, the *Smart Meal™ Seal* web site www.smartmealcolorado was developed to address educational and training needs. An \$800,000+ grant was received to: hire an additional .75% Smart Meal Coordinator; hire a marketing firm to launch the first SM branding/marketing campaign; re-design the SM training for both restaurants and community/state organizations. For more information, contact Shana Patterson, RD at shana.patterson@state.co.us