

Kaiser Permanente Incorporates Healthy Local Food Alternatives in Vending Machines and Cafeterias

OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

Kaiser Permanente (KP) is America's leading integrated health plan providing quality, affordable health care to its members and employees. KP is a nonprofit health and wellness organization whose care extends far beyond the health of their 8.7 million members. KP has developed and managed programs that promote the health of members and employees as well as the environment.

KP supports a comprehensive food policy that addresses the need to increase access to nutritious foods in a manner that promotes sustainable agricultural practices. KP has a Farm-to-Fork program that is supported by a partnership with the California Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF). The initiative began as a small Southern California pilot.



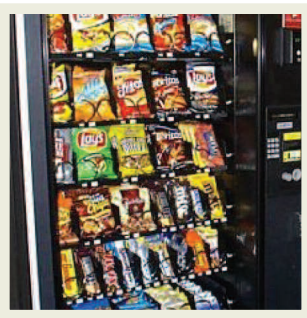
KP's program focuses on local food sourcing, hormone-free milk, fair-trade coffee, antibiotic-free meats and dairy products, pesticide-free produce and nuts, waste reduction and energy efficiency. Twenty facilities in the Northern California region rely on local sourcing for their produce needs, and facilities throughout the other regions are researching local sources in their areas as well.



Produce from local farms guarantees members and employees access to fresh, healthy foods. It also has positive impacts on the environment because the distance food travels from farm to plate is reduced. Overall, pollution, fuel consumption and emissions are reduced, water is conserved, and small farms offer products that are organic and hormone-free.

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In May 2003, KP initially introduced its farmers' markets program at the Oakland Medical Center. Now the program has grown to include 22 hospital-based markets at or near KP medical facilities in five different states. The Healthy Picks program followed in the footsteps of the farmers' markets initiative as a program to offer healthy foods to members and employees.



The Healthy Picks program has employed a number of different projects including a vending machine implementation, a cafeteria implementation and new patient menus. A green, circular Healthy Picks symbol is placed on the healthier items in the vending machines. A similar initiative was brought into the cafeterias in all KP-owned facilities, with a symbol used to identify a healthier pick. The new patient menus revolve around grains, whole wheat and increased amounts of locally sourced seasonal produce.

Through these projects, healthy foods are more accessible and KP is supporting environmental sustainability. KP's Healthy Picks and local sourcing efforts have attracted media attention from high-profile publications including *Time*, *Newsweek*, the *San Francisco Chronicle* and *The Wall Street Journal*. Articles and news stories have chiefly focused on KP's local sourcing efforts, with some attention on healthier facility food and farmers' markets.

The implementation of healthier vending machine snacks resulted in an increase in sales of 7.4 percent in the Southern California region. In Northern California, an increase of 6 percent occurred. The new patient menus had a significant impact on patient satisfaction and health but a minimal impact on cost. The cost of food increased only about 1 percent in the Northern California region.



In the future, KP plans to identify new ways to have a positive impact on the environment in the food sourcing strategies and processes. KP plans to offer wellness and health education programs to patients, members and employees, expand the farm stands and farmers' markets, and maintain contracts with local food suppliers and distributors.