Traffic light labelling (TLL) on a concession menu increased sales of healthy foods and decreased sales of unhealthy foods. TLL did not affect the concession’s total food sales (revenue).

Menu labelling is a promising population health intervention to improve diet.

Policies that require restaurants to post nutrition information on menus should include concessions and restaurants in public recreational facilities.

Many recreational facilities sell unhealthy food, which can make it more difficult for patrons to select healthy items.

Food service managers are often hesitant to sell healthier items because they believe customers will not buy them.

Menu labelling is a strategy that can help people choose healthier foods when eating outside of the home. TLL is a simple type of menu labelling. Similar to a traffic light, menu items are divided into 3 groups: Green means ‘most healthy’, yellow ‘somewhat healthy’ and red ‘least healthy’.

This study took place in 2014 in Edmonton, Alberta. One publicly funded, multi-sport recreational facility participated in the study. Traffic light symbols were placed next to foods and beverages on menu boards and food display shelves for 1 week in the concession.

Food items were labelled with a green ‘choose most’, yellow ‘choose sometimes’, or red ‘choose least often’ coloured dot. These categories were based on the Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth. Signs and fact sheets explaining the TLL were available for customers.

Researchers compared food and beverage sales with and without TLL.
In one multi-sport recreational facility concession, TLL resulted in more healthy and fewer less healthy food purchases. These changes did not significantly decrease the concession’s revenue.

TLL may be an effective way to increase customer demand for healthier items. With greater demand, managers may be more likely to offer healthier foods and beverages in their concessions.

Policymakers should consider mandating menu labelling in recreational facilities as a part of broader menu labelling regulations.

Do customers buy healthier food when it is clearly labelled? YES!

- In this study, patrons made healthier choices when TLL was in place. The sales of green light ‘healthy’ foods increased, while sales of red light ‘least healthy’ foods decreased.
- TLL did not affect concession revenue. The total amount of money received from concession sales and the total number of food items sold did not change after TLL was introduced.

Sales of green, yellow, and red light foods were recorded with and without TLL.

Average Daily Concession Revenue Without and With Traffic Light Labelling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Revenue ($)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Labelling</td>
<td>$975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic Light Labelling</td>
<td>$877*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Change was not statistically significant

REFERENCE


This research summary was produced by the Alberta Policy Coalition for Chronic Disease Prevention as a part of the Food Action in Recreation Environments project and generously supported by a grant from the Edmonton Community Foundation. For more information on policy to promote healthy food environments in recreational facilities, visit www.apccprecproject.com or email APCCP info@abpolicycoalitionforprevention.ca.