

Creating Healthy Spaces

In a world where fast food chains and processed snacks dominate, creating healthy food environments is essential for fostering healthy communities. A healthy food environment encompasses various factors, including accessibility to nutritious options, affordability, and education. Let's explore why creating healthy spaces is important, and discuss some ways we can influence spaces in our community to promote healthier eating.



The Importance of Healthy Food Environments

Creating healthy spaces, whether it be in your local grocery store, sports club or QCWA hall, makes it easy for individuals and communities to maintain a healthy diet and lifestyle. Healthy food environments mean that nutritious food is accessible, affordable, and promoted, and that individuals possess basic cooking skills to create nutritious meals. Let's look at some of the factors that go into creating healthy food environments, as well as some strategies we can implement to support them:

Accessibility: Food deserts are a common issue, particularly in low socio economic and rural areas. A food desert means that an area has limited access to affordable and nutritious foods. Healthy communities should have a variety of fresh fruit and vegetables available, ideally within walking distance in urban areas, or within the closest town in rural areas.

- **Strategy:** Encourage the establishment of farmers markets in your local area, as these are often a more local source of fresh fruit and vegetables. You may also consider starting a community garden, or work with your local supermarket to discuss improving the supply of healthy foods in your local store.

Affordability: Food prices have risen disproportionately to wages in recent years. This particularly true in more rural communities, who can often have lower wages than in urban areas but higher food prices. Healthy food environments should provide affordable, nutritious food options for their communities.

- **Strategy:** Advocate for subsidies or incentives that make nutritious foods more affordable for everyone. Encourage alternative sources of nutritious foods, such as farmer markets and community gardens that can provide more affordable, nutritious foods.



Nut Ed
by email

Promotion: Healthy foods should be at the forefront in local food environments. Grocery stores and community clubs often promote or put specials on unhealthy foods, encouraging unhealthy food selection by community members.

- **Strategy:** Advocate to local council or government around the importance of menu labelling, restrictions on advertising unhealthy foods to children, and implementing sugar and salt reduction measures. At a more local level, encourage your local grocery store to place healthy foods at the front of the store, and to increase weekly specials on nutritious foods.

Education: To maximise healthy food environments, individuals and communities as a whole need practical skills to navigate food environments and prepare nutritious meals.

- **Strategy:** Run a hands on nutrition workshop in your community. Encourage nutrition education at schools, workplaces, and community centres. Have healthy recipes on display at your local supermarket and community venues.

Creating healthy food environments is crucial for promoting wellbeing, preventing chronic diseases, and empowering individuals to eat nutritious foods. By ensuring access to nutritious foods, making them affordable, and educating individuals about healthy eating, we can build communities that prioritise health. Through policy interventions, collaboration, and community engagement, we can collectively create a positive ripple effect that extends far beyond individual health, benefiting entire communities. Country Kitchens has developed a Level 6 advocacy training session which can be a great place to start if you are looking to make changes in your community spaces - keep an eye out for the release of training dates, coming soon!

