

Vending Machines – Use the Right Sense



We all know the lure of the vending machine. The fancy packages and fun buttons are there to tempt us when hunger strikes. Unfortunately, this easy way to get a snack can often give you more than you bargained for on your waistline.

Many of the foods inside a vending machine are calorie dense and loaded with sugar, fat and sodium, not to

mention artery-clogging trans and saturated fats. The more often you depend on foods from them, the more stringent you need to be when making your choice about which button to push. Here are some common sense tips to help you use your cents wisely:

- Make your own vending machine drawer at work or in your locker at school. Keep healthful, shelf-stable items such as bottled water, raisins and other dried fruits, dry whole-grain cereal boxes, healthful trail mix, whole-grain crackers and canned fruits on hand.
- Some vendors are offering better choices. Know what is available in machines that are near you. It is best to take a look at them when you are not hungry so you can make a better decision when your stomach begins to grumble and you are caught without a snack.
- Keep a log of when you use the vending machine and what you eat (include calories too!). This will help you be aware of what you are consuming. It may also help you plan ahead better if you see the same times and days being logged.
- Give yourself a vending budget, and stick to it. Try not to keep loose change around or limit the amount that you carry.
- Be familiar with the list on the right so you know what to choose and what to skip.

Best Vending Choices

Overall, the better vending choices are whole foods: fruits, nuts, 100% fruit juices, skim milk and whole-grain cereal bars. Here is a list to look for:

Foods:

- Nuts/peanuts
- Dried fruits
- Canned fruits
- Trail mix
- Whole-grain cereal bars
- Pretzels
- Baked chips or crackers

Beverages:

- Bottled water
- 100% fruit juice
- Diet soda
- Tea (unsweetened or diet)
- Skim milk

Worst Vending Choices

Items that are high in fat and/or sugar are the least healthful choices. Often these items contain artery-clogging fats and are nutrient and fiber void. They are for emergency use only!

Here is a list:

Foods:

- Cookies, especially high fat
- Candy bars
- Chips
- Crackers, especially high fat
- Cakes and snack cakes
- Sausage meats
- Cheeses
- Sandwich crackers

Beverages:

- Sugared soda
- Sugared punch
- Whole milk