



Introduction to Food Environments: Contextualizing Retail Food Environment Assessments for Public Health Inspectors

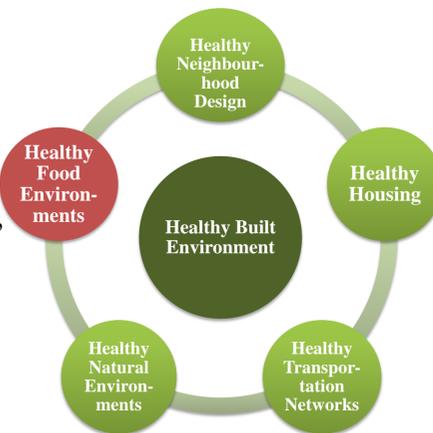
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Introduction to food environments

Food environments, identified as a physical feature of the built environment, have impacts on food access, availability, and affordability. **Built environment** is defined as the man-made physical environments in which people live, work, and play.



Community food environment

Geographic food access, which refers to the location and accessibility of food outlets

Consumer food environment

Food availability, food affordability, food quality, and other aspects influencing food choices in retail outlets

FOOD ENVIRONMENTS

Organizational food environment

Access to food in settings such as workplaces and schools

Information environment

Food marketing, media, advertising

- **Food retail environments**, including community food environment and consumer food environment, can influence the type of food purchased and consumed.

More healthy choices in retail settings



Better quality diets with fruits & veg



Better diet-related health outcomes

Why should Environmental Health get involved?

WHAT MAKES CANADIANS SICK

50%	YOUR LIFE	INCOME EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT DISABILITY EDUCATION SOCIAL EXCLUSION SOCIAL SAFETY NET GENDER EMPLOYMENT/WORKING CONDITIONS RACE ABORIGINAL STATUS SAFE AND NUTRITIOUS FOOD ← HOUSING/HOMELESSNESS COMMUNITY BELONGING
25%	YOUR HEALTH CARE	ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM WAIT TIMES
15%	YOUR BIOLOGY	BIOLOGY GENETICS
10%	YOUR ENVIRONMENT	AIR QUALITY COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

- Having access to **safe** and **nutritious** food is one of the major influences on health outcomes, such as obesity and chronic diseases.
- Chronic diseases are estimated to account for **55%** of direct and indirect healthcare costs in Ontario
- Traditional role of PHIs remains focused on reduction of risks and hazards for infectious diseases in food, water, sewage, and body modification practices.
- PHIs are in a unique position to promote and help create **supportive retail food environments** in which healthy eating can be easily practiced.
- Multisectoral action is key to maximizing effectiveness of health promotion strategies.

Health Canada's Food Environment Assessment Manual

- Developed by Health Canada in partnership with the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Group on Nutrition.
- Provides a user-friendly step-by-step guide for communities to assess their food retail environments.
- Focuses on two aspects of the food retail environment: **community food environment** and **consumer food environment**.
- First step of a comprehensive approach to create a healthy retail food environment in which healthy eating is promoted and easily practiced

Summary of the four steps

Map it

- Create a map of food retail outlets in the community
- Categorize the types of food retail outlets
- Add other indicators such as distance, density of outlet types, and relative density of healthy vs. unhealthy food outlets

Layer it

- Layer additional information including food cost, availability, quality, marketing and promotion, as well as socio-demographic and health data
- Various measurement tools available, such as Nutrition Environment Measures Survey, and shelf-space measures

Present it

- Present the assessment findings to a variety of stakeholders (e.g. health promoters, community groups, food retailers, business associations, city planners, city councillors)
- Frame the message in the context of the target audience
- Tell stories from community members

Act on it

- Most important step; outlines the various options for action
- Three options:
 - Consider more evidence
 - Influence policies
 - Influence programs

Potential future food retail intervention opportunities for Environmental Public Health

Modify the retail environment

Permit temporary farmers' markets in low-income areas or in areas with poor healthy food access

Reduce licensing fees for food outlets that carry more healthy foods

Mobile healthy food vending

Advocating for zoning or tax incentives for healthy stores or full grocery stores

Change the retailer

Recognition program for healthy food retail outlets

Healthy corner store programs

In-store marketing, point-of-sale product promotion (e.g. signs, product placement)

Mandatory nutrition information in restaurants

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