

HOSPITAL VENDING MACHINES TO DISPENSE THEIR LAST CHOC BAR

Health Minister announces new moves to meet *One Wales* commitment to improve hospital food and nutrition

Vending machines dispensing crisps, chocolate and sugary drinks are to be removed from all NHS hospitals in Wales, Health Minister Edwina Hart will announce today (Tuesday 25 March).

The announcement will go towards fulfilling the Welsh Assembly Government's *One Wales* commitment to deliver improvements in hospital food and nutrition. Wales is the first UK country to commit to such action.

The Assembly Government will liaise with the major vending providers to identify ways of introducing healthier food and drink. Guidance will be issued to the NHS to support the introduction of healthy vending, providing clear definitions of what will be allowed.

It is expected that most unhealthy vending machines will be removed from the majority of hospitals in Wales in the next six months, with only one hospital scheduled to not have healthy vending in place by 2010.

Edwina Hart said: "Diet has an important role to play in the prevention of obesity and chronic diseases such as coronary heart disease, diabetes, and certain cancers.

"The Assembly Government is committed to improving the health of the population of Wales and reducing inequalities by tackling the underlying causes of ill-health.

"We need to create an environment where it is easier for people to make healthy choices and our public sector settings should be an exemplar of best practice, particularly our hospitals.

“This is the first stage of the work to improve hospital food. We will be speaking with WRVS and other outlets in hospitals about further ways they can support the broader over-arching agenda to improve nutrition in hospitals.”

A recent study undertaken looking at vending machines in or close to paediatric departments in hospitals in Wales showed that very few Trusts had any vending machines where half or more of the drinks were healthy.

Huw Jenkins, consultant paediatric gastroenterologist at University Hospital Wales, which carried out the above research, said: "It is clear from a recent survey that the majority of vending machines around children's areas in Welsh hospitals do not provide enough healthy options.

“I fully welcome this timely and important announcement by the Health Minister, Edwina Hart. It will ensure that all vending machines are stocked with healthy options in the future.”

The move is the first development following a report from a group set up late last year, chaired by the Chief Nursing Officer for Wales, to improve food and drink consumed in hospitals by patients.

The move also complements work being undertaken on vending both in schools through the *Appetite for Life* programme and in leisure centres through the healthy eating pilots that the Assembly Government supported in eight local authorities. It also follows the announcement by the Health Minister just over a week ago to improve oral health through a national action plan focusing on children with severe tooth decay.

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Notes to editors:

1. The Assembly Government has also recently consulted people regarding priorities for improving the quality of food consumed in Wales through the Welsh Food Debate.

Feedback will be used to develop an action plan to make it easier for everybody in Wales to be able to eat food that is healthy, affordable and produced in a sustainable way, whilst supporting a strong and diverse Welsh food industry.

The action plan could include opportunities for local quality food producers to provide food and drink for healthy vending machines in hospitals.

2. For media enquiries only contact the Welsh Assembly Government Press Office on 029 2089 8012 / 8100 / 8890 or 029 2082 1823.

Public enquiries to: 0845 010 3300 (English) or 0845 010 4400 (Welsh).

Q&A

1. Why is the Assembly Government doing this?

- *One Wales*, the manifesto of the coalition Government, included a commitment to deliver improvements in hospital food and nutrition. This is the first step of that commitment.
- Nearly 20 per cent of 13 year-old children in Wales are overweight or obese – the highest rate in the UK – as are six in 10 men and half of women and the Government believes hospitals in particular should be exemplars of best practice.
- A recent study undertaken looking at vending machines in or close to paediatric departments in hospitals in Wales showed that very few Trusts had any vending machines where half or more of the drinks were healthy.

2. Is this a first for the UK?

- Yes, Wales is the first UK country to commit to such action.

3. How will healthier vending machines be introduced?

- The Assembly Government will liaise with the major vending providers to identify ways of introducing healthier food and drink. Guidance will be issued to the NHS to support the introduction of healthy vending, providing clear definitions of what will be allowed.

4. When will unhealthy vending machines be phased out?

- It is expected that most unhealthy vending machines will be removed from the majority of hospitals in Wales in the next six months – with just one hospital out of around 130 in Wales (University Hospital in Cardiff) scheduled to not have healthy vending in place by 2010.

5. What's the current situation on vending machines in hospitals?

- All but four Trusts have short-term arrangements which can be changed in the next six months. The four that have longer-term arrangements are:
 - Mid Wales NHS Trust where Bronllys Hospital has 20 months to run on a vending contract
 - Cardiff and the Vale NHS Trust where the University Hospital has a five-year vending contract
 - Bro Morgannwg Trust where across the Trust they have 18 months to run on vending contracts
 - Gwent Healthcare NHS Trust has a contract that has between 6-12 months to run.

6. Could these contracts be terminated earlier?

- It may be possible to terminate them sooner – perhaps within a year without excessive costs – although this would have to be negotiated and considered by Trusts.

7. Won't people just bypass the healthy vending machines and go to the shops instead?

- The Assembly Government says that this is only the first stage of the work to improve hospital food. The Government will be speaking with WRVS and other outlets in hospitals about further ways they can support the broader over-arching agenda to improve nutrition in hospitals.

8. Isn't this an example of the 'nanny state'?

- Diet has an important role to play in the prevention of obesity and chronic diseases such as coronary heart disease, diabetes, and certain cancers. The Assembly Government argues that this is all about creating an environment where it is easier for people to make healthy choices.

9. What's happening in other areas like schools and leisure centres?

- The move complements work being undertaken on vending both in schools through the *Appetite for Life* programme and in leisure centres through the healthy eating pilots that the Assembly Government supported in eight local authorities.