

Healthy Options Award

Guidance on
'Not Applicable' (N/A)
questions

Guidance on 'Not Applicable' (N/A) questions in the Healthy Options assessment form

Within the Healthy Options assessment form, assessors need to answer 'yes', 'no' or 'Not Applicable (N/A)' to each question and circle the appropriate score. This document has been put together to help clarify when it is acceptable to give a 'N/A' answer.

There are 3 main reasons why a N/A answer may be given:

- The 'less healthy' food or cooking method referred to in the question is already not being used i.e. the question refers to cakes but the premises does not serve any cakes.
- The 'healthier' food referred to in the question is not offered, but it is unreasonable or inappropriate to expect them to do so i.e. Chinese cuisine does not usually use milk or dairy products so it would be unreasonable to expect them to change.
- The 'healthier' method of preparing or cooking food is not used, but it would be unreasonable (or extremely difficult) for them to do so i.e. premises with limited or no cooking facilities.

FRUIT AND FRUIT JUICE

(1) Is a portion of fresh fruit available every day (i.e. on display or on the menu)?

The question should be answered as 'N/A' if:

(a) they do not serve fresh fruit and it would be unreasonable to expect them to do so because of the type of cuisine they serve e.g.

- Chinese / Indian / other Asian restaurants and takeaways
- Other restaurants that do not serve *snacks, lunches or meals* that could include a piece of fresh fruit/portion of fruit salad etc

(2) Are fruit based desserts or puddings available (e.g. fruit salads, stewed fruit)?

The question should be answered as 'N/A' if:

(a) they do not serve *any* desserts or puddings

If desserts or puddings *are* served, they should be able to have fruit based options.

(3) Do you serve unsweetened fruit juices?

A 'N/A' answer should not be given - Most, if not all, establishments serve drinks, so all establishments should be able to serve fruit juice.

VEGETABLES

(4) Are there at least 2 types of vegetables (frozen/tinned/fresh) available on display or on the menu?

The question should be answered as 'N/A' if:

(a) they do not serve *hot meals* (e.g. sandwich shops or establishments without cooking facilities)

(5) Are vegetables always: steamed/stir fried; and/or boiled in minimal water which is then reused in sauces?

The question should be answered as 'N/A' if:

(a) question (4) is N/A, then this question should also be N/A

If the answer to question (4) is 'yes' or 'no', this question cannot be 'N/A'. This prevents premises that *could* serve vegetables but choose not to from receiving points for a N/A answer.

Guidance on 'Not Applicable' (N/A) questions in the Healthy Options assessment form

(6) Are main meals like curries, casseroles etc bulked up with at least 2 or more veg, beans or pulses?

The question should be answered as '[N/A](#)' if:

(a) they do not serve any foods which could be bulked up (e.g. establishments without cooking facilities, or places with a limited menu)

SALADS

(7) Are all meals available with an undressed side salad or can customers choose an undressed side salad to accompany their meal?

The question should be answered as '[N/A](#)' if:

(a) main meals are not served

If main meals are served, a side salad could be provided by any type of cuisine (even if it is just an option on the menu).

(8) Do you have undressed main salad dishes? [i.e. dressing optional or served on the side]

The question should be answered as '[N/A](#)' if:

(a) main meals are not served

If main meals are served, a main course salad could be offered by any type of cuisine. (Although some cuisines such as Chinese and Indian restaurants in the UK often do not serve main course salads it would be possible to offer one as an option (e.g. Chicken Tikka salad, or Chinese lemon & ginger chicken noodle salad).

(9) Does your available salad have at least five undressed salad items (e.g. lettuce, tomato, cucumber, grated carrot, sweetcorn)?

The question should be answered as '[N/A](#)' if:

(a) question (8) is N/A, then this question would also be N/A

If the answer to question (8) is 'yes' or 'no', this question cannot be 'N/A'. This prevents premises that *could* serve salad but choose not to from receiving points for a N/A answer.

(10) Are all sandwiches/rolls/baguettes available with salad (automatically or on request)?

The question should be answered as '[N/A](#)' if:

(a) they do not serve sandwiches / rolls / baguettes

POTATOES

(11) Is a lower fat alternative to fried (chipped)/roasted potato products always available (e.g. jacket, boiled or mashed, oven-baked chips, pasta, boiled noodles and rice)?

The question should be answered as '[N/A](#)' if:

(a) they do not serve fried / roasted potatoes

If fried / roasted potatoes are not served, but the alternatives are available, the assessor can either say 'yes' or 'N/A' (they both score the same points).

(12) When deep frying are straight, thick cut chips/wedges used rather than thin cut fries, curly fries or French fries?

The question should be answered as '[N/A](#)' if:

(a) chips / fries are not available at all

Guidance on 'Not Applicable' (N/A) questions in the Healthy Options assessment form

(13) If serving boiled, new or mashed potatoes, are potatoes steamed, or boiled in a minimum of water that is re-used in sauces?

Steaming potatoes, or boiling them in minimal water which is then used to make up sauces/gravy, is a healthier method to cook potatoes as it helps to retain the vitamin C which can be lost in cooking water (and it does not require any added fat).

The question should be answered as 'N/A' if:

- (a) there are no types of potato served at all, or,
- (b) there are no potatoes available that are cooked using water / steam, but there are potatoes available cooked using a different *healthy* method (e.g. jacket potatoes without salt or oil)

The question should be answered as 'No' if:

- (a) potatoes are boiled, but an excessive* amount of water is used and / or the water is *not* re-used in sauces *(ideally, the level of water should just cover the potatoes in the pan), or,
- (b) there are no potatoes available that are cooked using water / steam but there are only potatoes available cooked using an *unhealthy* method (such as fried frozen pre-cut chips).

BREAD, ROLLS and BAGUETTES

(14) Are wholemeal or granary bread, rolls and baguettes always available?

As bread is a healthy starch-based food, establishments should be encouraged to have bread as an option where possible.

The question should be answered as 'N/A' if:

- (a) by tradition of the cuisine they do not serve bread
- (e.g. Chinese / Thai style restaurants do not serve bread with meals)

Most other establishments should be able to provide bread (including wholemeal / granary) as a starter or accompaniment, even if they don't serve filled rolls / sandwiches.

RICE AND PASTA

(15) Is brown rice always available? (can be served mixed with white / coloured varieties)

As rice is a healthy starch-based food, establishments should be encouraged to have rice as an option where possible. This question is N/A if rice dishes are not served and *it would be unreasonable to expect them to do so*.

The question should be answered as 'N/A' if:

- (a) they do not serve any main meals or salads at all (e.g. sandwich shops), or,
- (b) they do not have any main meals that could be served with rice, or salads that could include rice

On this basis, most restaurants and takeaways that serve a range of main course dishes should be able to serve rice (including brown rice). If a chip shop serves curry or chilli con carne, it should be available with rice (not just chips) and have brown rice as an option. If a café has a salad bar, rice (including brown rice) should be available.

(16) Is wholewheat pasta always available? (can be served mixed with white / coloured varieties)

As pasta is a healthy starch-based food, establishments should be encouraged to have pasta / noodles as an option where possible. This question is N/A if pasta dishes are not served and *it would be unreasonable to expect them to do so*.

The question should be answered as 'N/A' if:

- (a) they do not serve main meals or salads at all, (e.g. sandwich shops), or,
- (b) by tradition of the cuisine they do not serve pasta or noodles (e.g. Indian restaurants), or,
- (c) by tradition they do not serve pasta, but they do serve egg noodles / rice noodles and it would be unfeasible to expect them to serve wholemeal noodles (e.g. Chinese / Thai restaurants), or,
- (d) they do not have any main meals that could be served with pasta, or salads that could include pasta (e.g. fish & chip shops)

Guidance on 'Not Applicable' (N/A) questions in the Healthy Options assessment form

On this basis, apart from Indian / Chinese / Thai, most restaurants and takeaways that serve a range of main course dishes should be able to serve pasta (including wholewheat pasta).

BREAKFAST CEREALS

(17) If you offer breakfast, are at least 2 lower sugar / lower salt and/or higher fibre varieties of breakfast cereal available daily?

The question should be answered as ['N/A'](#) if:

- (a) they do not serve breakfast, or,
- (b) they just sell an 'all-day breakfast' as part of the menu

All premises that open early and serve breakfast, should be able to offer breakfast cereals (including healthier options).

PASTRY

(18) If pies are available, is there an option with either a lid or a base only?

The question should be answered as ['N/A'](#) if:

- (a) no pies (made with pastry) are available

(19) If pastry products are available, is there an option made with at least half wholemeal flour?

The question should be answered as ['N/A'](#) if:

- (a) no pastry products are available

MILK AND OTHER DAIRY PRODUCTS

(20) Is semi-skimmed or fully skimmed milk available for drinks/in drinks?

A ['N/A'](#) answer should not be given - Most, if not all, establishments serve drinks, so all establishments should be able to serve milk, either as a chilled drink or to add to hot drinks.

(21) Is semi-skimmed or fully skimmed milk/low fat yoghurt/fromage frais used in cooking instead of cream (sauces, custard and soups etc)?

The question should be answered as ['N/A'](#) if:

- (a) they do not cook hot food at all, or,
- (b) they do not cook with dairy products (e.g. Chinese and some other Asian cuisines, plus vegan restaurants),

(22) Is semi-skimmed or fully skimmed milk or low fat yoghurt/custard available as an accompaniment (e.g. on their own, with cereal, puddings or desserts)?

The question should be answered as ['N/A'](#) if:

- (a) they do not use dairy products as an accompaniment

CHEESE

(23) Are lower-fat cheeses (such as Edam, Brie, Camembert), 'half-fat' varieties, or smaller quantities (i.e. less than in the standard recipe) of stronger flavoured cheeses used for cooking?

The question should be answered as ['N/A'](#) if:

- (a) they do not cook with cheese

Guidance on 'Not Applicable' (N/A) questions in the Healthy Options assessment form

(24) Are lower-fat cheeses (such as Edam, Brie, Camembert, cottage cheese) or 'half-fat' varieties available for sandwiches/ salads/ with crackers etc?

The question should be answered as ['N/A'](#) if:

- (a) they do not serve cheese at all (e.g. Chinese / Thai style restaurants), or,
- (b) they only use cheese in cooking (e.g. an Indian restaurant if paneer is only used in cooking)

RED MEAT AND MEAT PRODUCTS

(25) Are lean cuts of meat used and/or visible fat removed before cooking?

The question should be answered as ['N/A'](#) if:

- (a) they do not serve meat at all, or,
- (b) they do not serve cuts of meat, but do serve meat products

(26) Are meat and meat products, like sausages and burgers, offered grilled, baked or roasted on a rack, not just fried and roasted in fat?

The question should be answered as ['N/A'](#) if:

- (a) they do not cook meat or meat products

(27) Is excess fat skimmed off minced meat, casseroles, stews, curries, etc?

The question should be answered as ['N/A'](#) if:

- (a) they do not cook these kinds of dishes that have fat to be skimmed off

POULTRY

(28) Is skin removed from poultry before cooking (other than roast chicken)? (or if buying in pre-cooked chicken, skin is removed before serving)

The question should be answered as ['N/A'](#) if:

- (a) they do not cook or serve any poultry (such as chicken, duck or turkey)

If an establishment buys in *pre-cooked* poultry, the skin should either be removed by supplier, or by the establishment before preparing / serving.

(29) Is oven baked/stir-fried/grilled poultry available as an alternative to fried?

The question should be answered as ['N/A'](#) if:

- (a) they do not serve poultry

FISH

(30) Is oven baked / stir fried / grilled / steamed fish available as an alternative to fried? (includes shellfish)

The question should be answered as ['N/A'](#) if:

- (a) it is a vegetarian restaurant

N.B. To gain a 'Yes' answer, the non-fried fish option should be equivalent to the other food that is served e.g. If main meals are served, there should be a non-fried fish main course (not just non-fried fish starter or sandwich filling).

If *only* sandwiches, jacket potatoes or pizzas are served, the non-fried option can be a sandwich or jacket potato filling, or fish pizza topping.

Guidance on 'Not Applicable' (N/A) questions in the Healthy Options assessment form

(31) Is oily fish such as salmon, mackerel, sardines, trout (all fresh, frozen and canned), tuna (fresh only) available?

The question should be answered as ['N/A'](#) if:

(a) it is a vegetarian restaurant

Other establishments should be able to have oily fish available. Even sandwich shops could have tinned salmon or smoked mackerel as an option.

(32) If using canned fish, is it canned in spring water/tomato sauce? (instead of brine / oil)

The question should be answered as ['N/A'](#) if:

(a) they do not use tinned fish

MEAT ALTERNATIVES FOR VEGETARIANS (NUTS, BEANS, PULSES, TOFU, QUORN etc)

(33) Are there at least two lower fat vegetarian options available daily (only 1 should be cheese based)?

A ['N/A'](#) answer should not be given - Every establishment should be able to provide vegetarian options. To gain a 'Yes' answer, the vegetarian option should be equivalent to the other food that is served e.g. If main meals are served, there should be vegetarian main courses available (not just vegetarian starters or side dishes). If only sandwiches or jacket potatoes are served, vegetarian fillings should be available.

(34) Are vegetarian meat alternatives offered grilled, baked or roasted on a rack, not just fried and roasted in fat?

The question should be answered as ['N/A'](#) if:

(a) they do not cook vegetarian meat alternatives

COOKING / PREPARATION

(35) Are predominantly monounsaturated / polyunsaturated oils used in all cooking processes using fats and oils?

The question should be answered as ['N/A'](#) if:

(a) they do not cook at all, or,
(b) they do not cook using any fats or oils

(36) If you offer the following, are they available prepared / cooked / served without added fat (e.g. butter/spread/oil/ghee):

Vegetables

The question should be answered as ['N/A'](#) if:

(a) they do not serve vegetables

Potatoes (mashed, boiled, new, jacket)

The question should be answered as ['N/A'](#) if:

(a) they do not offer any type of potato at all

The question should be answered as ['No'](#) if:

(a) they offer potato, but have no options prepared, cooked and served without added fat

The question should be answered as ['Yes'](#) if:

(a) they offer potato options that are prepared, cooked and served without added fat

Guidance on 'Not Applicable' (N/A) questions in the Healthy Options assessment form

Pasta

The question should be answered as 'N/A' if:

- (a) they do not serve pasta

Noodles

The question should be answered as 'N/A' if:

- (a) they do not serve noodles

Rice

The question should be answered as 'N/A' if:

- (a) they do not serve rice

Eggs (boiled, poached, scrambled)

The question should be answered as 'N/A' if:

- (a) they do not offer any type of eggs at all

The question should be answered as 'No' if:

- (a) they offer eggs, but have no options prepared, cooked and served without added fat

The question should be answered as 'Yes' if:

- (a) they offer egg options that are prepared, cooked and served without added fat

BUTTER AND SPREADS

(37) Are sandwiches, rolls and baguettes available without butter/spread?

The question should be answered as 'N/A' if:

- (a) they do not serve sandwiches, rolls or baguettes

(38) Are lower fat/monounsaturated/ polyunsaturated spreads offered instead of butter?

The question should be answered as 'N/A' if:

- (a) they do not have any foods that are served with butter or spread

(e.g. sandwiches, bread / rolls served with meals, jacket / new potatoes, teacakes, toast etc).

(39) If butter / spread is served with foods (e.g. potatoes, toast, bread rolls), is it always served separately / on the side?

The question should be answered as 'N/A' if:

- (a) they do not have any foods that are served with butter or spread

(e.g. bread / rolls served with meals, jacket / new potatoes, teacakes, toast etc)

DRESSINGS AND CONDIMENTS

(40) If mayonnaise is used, is it always reduced fat?

The question should be answered as 'N/A' if:

- (a) they do not use mayonnaise

(41) Are reduced fat salad dressings always available?

The question should be answered as 'N/A' if:

- (a) they do not use or have *any* salad dressings available (except mayonnaise)

N.B. If they serve low fat (less than 3%) options, but no 'reduced fat' options, the answer should be 'No' as they get points for 'low fat' dressings in the next question.

Guidance on 'Not Applicable' (N/A) questions in the Healthy Options assessment form

(42) Are low fat (less than 3%) salad dressings always available?

The question should be answered as 'N/A' if:

(a) they do not use or have *any* salad dressings available (except mayonnaise).

SAUCES

(43) Are lower fat cooking sauces (e.g. tomato based) always available as an alternative to creamy sauces with a high fat content (e.g. carbonara or korma)?

The question should be answered as 'N/A' if:

(a) they do not have dishes that include sauces

(44) Are customers able to choose whether desserts, puddings and cakes are plain or served with cream/custard/ice-cream?

The question should be answered as 'N/A' if:

(a) they do not serve desserts, puddings or cakes

SUGAR

(45) Are low sugar/artificially sweetened drinks available (excluding plain, unflavoured water)?

A 'N/A' answer should not be given - Most, if not all, establishments serve drinks, so all establishments should be able to serve low sugar or artificially sweetened drinks. This includes artificially sweetened flavoured water, but plain unflavoured water is covered in a later question.

(46) Are artificial sweeteners available as an alternative to sugar (e.g. for customers to add to hot drinks or cereal)?

The question should be answered as 'N/A' if:

(a) they do not serve any food or drink which may have sugar added at time of serving / consuming (e.g. takeaways that do not serve hot drinks)

(47) Are lower sugar desserts and puddings available? (these may be made with less sugar, using artificial sweeteners, using fruit to sweeten etc) [do not include fruit salads which are covered in fruit section]

The question should be answered as 'N/A' if:

(a) they do not serve *any* desserts or puddings, or,
(b) they *only* serve fruit salad (which is dealt with in a previous question)

SNACKS, BISCUITS and CAKES

(48) Are lower fat cakes always available e.g. reduced fat muffins?

The question should be answered as 'N/A' if:

(a) they do not serve *any* cakes or sweet pastries

(49) Are two or more types of healthier alternatives to confectionery e.g. chocolate and savoury snacks e.g. standard crisps, available? (e.g. dried fruit, nuts and seeds, baked crisps, rice cakes, rye bread)

The question should be answered as 'N/A' if:

(a) they do not serve *any* confectionery or savoury snacks

(50) Are healthier alternatives to biscuits and cakes available, such as teacakes, malt loaf, fruit bread [excluding fruit. Also note a lot of cereal type bars are high in sugar]

The question should be answered as 'N/A' if:

(a) they do not serve *any* cakes, biscuits or sweet pastries

Guidance on 'Not Applicable' (N/A) questions in the Healthy Options assessment form

SALT

(51) Are other methods of flavour enhancing used such as herbs, spices, lemon juice or vinegar *instead of salt/MSG/soy sauce etc*?

In most, if not all, cases this question would be a 'yes' or 'no' answer.

The question should be answered as 'N/A' if:

(a) they do not use *any* method for flavour enhancing (very unlikely)

(52) Is unsalted water used when cooking:

- rice

- potatoes

- pasta

- vegetables?

The question should be answered as 'N/A' if:

(a) they do not cook rice/pasta/potatoes/vegetables at all, or,

(b) they do not cook rice/pasta/potatoes/vegetables in water, but cook it using another method *without* added salt

The question should be answered as 'No' if:

(a) they cook rice/pasta/potatoes/vegetables in salted water, or,

(b) they do not cook rice/pasta/potatoes/vegetables in water, but cook it using another method *with* added salt

(53) Are customers given the choice whether they want salt or to add salt to their food (e.g. chips, baked potato, sandwiches)?

The question should be answered as 'N/A' if:

(a) they serve all food without adding salt at time of serving

WATER

Is water always available, either:

(54) tap water (freely available on the counter/table or offered to customers)?

The question should be answered as 'N/A' if:

(a) they do not have eat-in/seating facilities, making it difficult to serve glasses/cups of water (e.g. takeaways)

(55) unflavoured bottled water?

A 'N/A' answer should not be given - Most, if not all, establishments serve drinks, so all establishments should be able to serve unflavoured bottled water.

CHILDREN'S MEALS

(56) Are at least 2 appropriately priced small portions of healthier adult meals available?

The question should be answered as 'N/A' if:

(a) children do not eat at the establishment

(e.g. workplace canteens, some restaurants that target adults only)

(57) Does at least half of the children's menu contain healthier options?

The question should be answered as 'N/A' if:

Guidance on 'Not Applicable' (N/A) questions in the Healthy Options assessment form

(a) they do not have a dedicated children's menu

PROMOTION AND DISPLAY

(58) Are healthier options promoted by:

- giving a more prominent position on displays than less healthy options?
- clearly indicating healthy options on the menu/labelling food on display?
- staff actively promoting healthier options (e.g. prompting customers to order extra salad/vegetables or offering an alternative to chips)?
- using pricing policies or promotions to encourage customers to have vegetables, salads, fruits or additional starchy foods such as bread?

For 'giving a more prominent position on displays than less healthy options?' a N/A answer should only be given if there is no food visible/on display to the customer.

For the remaining questions a 'N/A' answer should not be given - All establishments should be able to promote healthier options.

STAFF TRAINING

(59) Are staff aware of the healthier options that are available?

(60) Have key members of staff undertaken recognised/accredited nutrition training (certificate for evidence), and have they cascaded key messages to all other staff? (records of training)

(61) If 'Yes' to above, can all staff demonstrate an understanding of why they are promoting healthier options i.e. importance of reducing fat and sugar intake, and increasing fibre and different types of fats and why some fats are healthier etc?

A 'N/A' answer should not be given - To gain a higher award, key staff must have received recognised training in nutrition and all staff should be aware of the healthier options.