

10 Easy Ways to Incorporate Farm to Hospital into Health and Wellness Programming



1. **Connect with Other Local Food Efforts** –Rather than reinventing the wheel, connect with other local food efforts in the community. This will not only help build partnerships, but an opportunity to highlight your institution as both community based and health promoting.
2. **Local Food Cooking** – Cooking classes featuring fresh local foods are an easy way to start highlighting local food and farms as well as promoting healthy eating. This may be a one-time chef demonstration in the cafeteria or a series integrated into existing classes/programs. These types of classes get staff, patients and the broader community excited about healthy eating and the benefits of seasonal menu planning.
3. **Community Support Agriculture (CSA)** – Also known as farm shares or weekly produce shares, CSA shares are often offered by small scale diversified farms. Participants pre-pay for a “share” before the planting and then enjoy a box of seasonal products weekly throughout the growing season. Hospitals have incorporated CSA shares into their health and wellness programming by providing discounts to staff or simply coordinating participation (many farmers will deliver to the hospitals if there is enough interest).
4. **Farmers Markets** – What better way to promote fresh fruit and vegetable consumption than to have them fresh and conveniently available at community centers such as hospitals? Hospital farmers markets have become popular across the country as a way to support local farms and make hospitals models for health and wellness.
5. **Food Policy** – Incorporating local food and farms into health and wellness programming can easily fall by the way side as staff and programs shift. If you truly want to create distinguish your program as a leader in the field, drafting and implementing local food policy is an essential step. This can be as simple as including language about promoting local purchasing to establishing short and long term goals for your institution and programming.
6. **Events/Catering** – A good way to promote health and wellness is to practice what you preach. Incorporate local food into events and meetings (and general catering), use farmer profiles to identify the local food, or use local food products as prizes. This does not have to be all or nothing and can include components such as featuring one local item on a menu or offering heirloom tomato tastings.
7. **Hospital Gardens** –The viability of establishing a garden may vary based on your facility, staff and programming, but can be as simple as edible container gardening. Gardens for hospital areas designed for children can provide a therapeutic space for children and their families. Gardens not only produce fresh healthy food, but offer connections to how food is grown, relaxation, and low impact exercise.
8. **Newsletter/Publications** - If you are not ready to commit to a hospital garden or on-going local purchasing, it is simple to incorporate local food and farm promotions into hospital newsletters or publications. This may include season recipes, where to find local food in the community, farmer profiles, benefits of local food, farmer’s market promotions, family friendly farm events, etc.
9. **Community Outreach** – Health and wellness programming does not have to take place at a hospital. Identifying yourself as fresh food and farm advocates in the broader community can be an invaluable strategy for promoting your hospital and extending the reach of your messaging. This may include hospital chefs offering cooking demos at local farmers’ markets/health fairs/community events or partnering with local non-profits to expand outreach/messaging.
10. **Farm Field Trips** –Farm field trips are often associated with school groups, but any age group can benefit with reconnecting with how food is grown and who is growing it in your community. A diabetes support group or hospital staff, anyone can benefit from the change in routine and prospective a field trip can offer. Whether the focus is exercise, nutrition or team building, a field trip can include a short drive to a local farm or a walk to the local farmers market.