

Sodexo & Nuffield Health First to Show 22% Drop in Food-Related Emissions with Greener by Default

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[Sodexo UK & Ireland](#) and its client partner Nuffield Health have reduced food-related carbon emissions by a massive 22% - the equivalent of over 100,000 miles driven - through a ground-breaking programme with Greener by Default, started in early 2025, that is reshaping the future of patient dining.

Sodexo was the first hospital catering provider in the UK to implement the approach for patient dining, which saw the introduction of a series of culinary and behavioural changes across 35 Nuffield Health Hospitals, designed to nudge diners toward plant-based options.

Menus that were previously 24% meat, 42% vegetarian and 34% vegan dishes were shifted dramatically to 18% meat, 41% vegetarian and 41% vegan.

More than half of the patient menu was updated, introducing new options such as vegan soup rolls and removing the grill bar to place greater emphasis on plant-based meals. Processed meats such as bacon and ham were reduced or removed, and dairy-free options were expanded. Plant-based dishes were given prime placement on menus and flavour-focused names to make them more appealing to patients.

The initiative aims to support Nuffield Health's ambition of achieving a 90% plant-based menu, driving improvements in health, inclusivity and environmental impact while maintaining high levels of diner satisfaction.

Changes to the menu also support better health and improved patient outcomes. Surgery places significant strain on the body, so offering more plant-forward and meat-free options - which are often

higher in key nutrients – will help promote overall health and supports faster recovery.

Dr Davina Deniszczyc, Charity and Medical Director at Nuffield Health, said: “As the UK’s largest healthcare charity, our purpose is to help people live healthier lives. Plant-based food is highly nutritious, helps prevent ill health and can play an important role in recovery. With our ambition to reduce our carbon footprint, this project gave us a unique opportunity to bring together both environmental and nutritional benefits. The response from patients has been fantastic, with many telling us they feel encouraged to include more plant-based dishes in their everyday diet.”

To embed the changes, Sodexo and Greener by Default delivered webinars, staff training and leadership briefings. Patient satisfaction was monitored continuously to ensure quality and experience remained strong.

As well as reducing carbon emissions by more than a fifth, the average meat served per patient reduced by 14%, while plant protein servings increased by nearly 50%. Crucially, high levels of diner satisfaction were maintained throughout the pilot.

Neil Paterson, Nuffield Operations Director at Sodexo said: “Our client’s ambitions of increasing plant-based options in patient dining are closely aligned to our own ambition to deliver 70% low carbon meals by 2030.

“We started working with Greener by Default in 2025 and we’ve been delighted by the results. The pilot has shown what’s possible, and our aim now is to continue to work with Nuffield Health towards a menu that is 90% plant-based whilst maintaining standards and satisfaction.”

Amy Roach, UK Healthcare Manager from Greener by Default highlighted the strength of the partnership: “Sodexo and Nuffield Health understand the need for a shift to a more sustainable food system and have embraced it wholeheartedly. This early work showcases how behavioural science, culinary innovation and cross-sector collaboration can come together to deliver healthier, more sustainable and more inclusive dining experiences.”

With this strong evidence in place, the plant-based approach will now be further embedded, supported by new menu refreshes this spring and extended across all hospitality and staff menus.