




FOOD SERVICE

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Nutritional Facts for School Lunch Program

The Food and Nutrition Service administers several programs that provide healthy food to children including the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Child and Adult Care Food Program, Summer Food Service Program, Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program and Special Milk Program. Administered by state agencies, each of these programs helps fight hunger and obesity by reimbursing organizations such as schools, child care centers, and after-school programs for providing healthy meals to children.

Through legislation, USDA made the first major changes in school meals in 15 years, which will help schools raise a healthier generation of children.

The new standards align school meals with the latest nutrition science and the real-world circumstances of America's schools. These responsible reforms do what's right for children's health in a way that's achievable in schools across the Nation.

Schools must follow the food-based menu planning option which involves planned menus meeting at least minimum daily quantities of fluid milk, meat or meat alternate, vegetables, fruits and grains.

Schools must also ensure the children are offered a variety of vegetable subgroups weekly, milk must be 1% or fat-free unflavored or fat-free flavored, all of the grains offered to students must be whole grain rich. Sodium is another factor school must take in consideration when offering healthy foods to children.

To ensure a child is getting a completed reimbursable meal, they must take a minimum of three of the five-components listed below.

Fruits and Vegetables

- Children eat more fruits and vegetables, when more fruits and vegetables are offered. A recent Harvard study reported that, under the updated standards for school meals, children are now eating 16% more vegetables and 23% more fruit at lunch. Each child must take a minimum per day, grades K-8, ½ cup; grades 9-12, 1 cup of fruit and grades K-8, ¾ cup; grades 9-12, 1 cup of vegetable. Children must select at least ½ cup of either the fruits or the vegetables component, or a ½ cup combination of both components (¼ cup fruit and ¼ cup vegetable).

Whole Grain Rich

- School meals are giving children the goodness of whole-grains. Whole-grains give children B vitamins, minerals, and fiber to help them feel full longer so they stay alert to concentrate at school.
- Schools can use grain products that are a blend of whole-grains and more refined enriched grains. This allows for baked goods that can be more acceptable to children - their color is lighter and the texture is more similar to refined breads and pastas. USDA is also giving schools some flexibility when offering whole-grains while industry develops suitable whole grain-rich items.
- There are many products that meet the whole-grain rich criteria available that schools are using to make rice bowls, sandwiches, wraps, and more. Each child must take a minimum per day, grades K-8, 1 ounce; grades 9-12, 2 ounces whole-grain rich item.

Meat/Meat Alternate

- School meals must contain a meat/meat alternate item daily. Each child must take a minimum per day, grades K-8, 1 ounce equivalent; grades 9-12, 2 ounces equivalent.

Fluid Milk

- School meals must offer a variety of flavored milk daily. Milk must be 1% low-fat flavored or unflavored or fat-free unflavored or flavored. Fat-free or Low-Fat Lactose milk is also available for those who requirement dairy free milk. Each child must take a minimum per day, grades K-12, 1 cup of fluid milk.

Sodium Requirements

- Sodium, also known as salt, is often added to foods during processing, cooking, or at the table. While the body needs some sodium, almost everyone eats more than the body needs. Too much sodium plays a role in high blood pressure, which makes it harder for the heart to do its job.
- Schools are an important player in overall national efforts to reduce the amount of salt that people eat. As such, schools participating in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program will continue to reduce the amount of salt in meals by choosing lower sodium versions of foods and flavoring foods with spices and herbs. Daily amount of sodium is based on an average for a 5-day week. Grades K-5 = max 1110 or less; grades 6-8 = max 1225 or less and 9-12 = max 1280 or less.

Added Sugar

- *Product-based limits to be implemented by school year 2025-26 (beginning July 1, 2025):*
 - **Breakfast cereals** may have no more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce.
 - **Yogurt** may have no more than 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces (2 grams of added sugars per ounce).
 - **Flavored milk** may have no more than 10 grams of added sugars per 8 fluid ounces or, for flavored milk sold as a competitive food for middle and high schools, 15 grams of added sugars per 12 fluid ounces.
- *Weekly dietary limits to be implemented by school year 2027-28 (beginning July 1, 2027):*
 - In addition to product-based limits described above, the final rule also establishes a dietary specification limiting added sugars to less than 10 percent of calories across the week in the school lunch and breakfast programs.

Focusing on Smart Snacks



- During school year 2014-15, all foods sold at school during the school day are required to meet nutrition standards. The Smart Snacks in School regulation applies to foods sold a la carte, in the school store, vending machines, and any other venues where food is sold to students.
- A number of tools and resources are available to help schools identify food items that meet Smart Snacks criteria.

For more information regarding school meals nutrition standards and smart snack choices, please visit the USDA Food and Nutrition Service Nutrition Standards website at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/healthierschoolday/tools-schools-focusing-smart-snacks>

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