

THE REAL FOOD GUIDE TO SCHOOL BREAKFAST FOR FAMILIES

Eat Real Food



School meals include whole, healthy foods that give kids the right balance of nutrients, while reducing added sugars and sodium.



Fruits

A full cup of fruit is available every day, providing nutrients that are important for kids' health, such as potassium, dietary fiber, vitamin C, and folate.



Milk

Kids and teens need the calcium, protein, and vitamin D found in milk for strong bones, teeth, and muscles.



Grains

Starting every day with whole grains gives kids and teens B vitamins, minerals, and fiber to feel fuller longer so they stay alert to concentrate at school.



Protein Foods

Some breakfast menus may offer items such as eggs, yogurt, meat, or beans. Protein foods give kids and teens many nutrients including iron, B vitamins, zinc, and magnesium.



Vegetables

Schools may offer vegetables in place of or alongside fruits to provide a variety of nutrients, textures, and flavors that children and teens enjoy.



Visit fna.usda.gov/teamnutrition for additional tips and activities.



HOW DOES SCHOOL BREAKFAST

Help Families?



Fuels learning

Kids and teens can concentrate on their schoolwork better when they're not hungry. Studies show that kids do better in school when they eat breakfast.



Boosts nutrition

Studies show that kids and teens who regularly eat breakfast have higher intakes of dietary fiber, B vitamins, calcium, iron, and other nutrients and healthier growth.



Saves time

School breakfast can simplify mornings for families by offering kids and teens healthy options that fit into their schedule.

How can families help their child eat a healthy breakfast?

- 1** Read the menu with your child to make sure your student knows about all the foods that are included in their school breakfast.
- 2** Find out how your parent organization can work with school nutrition professionals to promote breakfast options at your school, such as Breakfast in the Classroom and Grab & Go Breakfast.
- 3** Get involved in your school wellness initiatives and learn more at fna.usda.gov/tn/wellness-policy.



The Dietary Guidelines offer recommendations for healthy eating and serve as the foundation for federal nutrition programs and policies, including school meal programs. You can explore the 2025–2030 Dietary Guidelines at RealFood.gov.

The School Breakfast Program (SBP) is a federally assisted meal program operating in public and nonprofit private schools—including charter schools—and residential child care institutions. The SBP started in 1966 as a pilot project and was made a permanent program by Congress in 1975.

Learn more at www.fna.usda.gov/sbp



THE REAL FOOD GUIDE TO **SCHOOL LUNCH** FOR FAMILIES

Eat Real Food



School meals include whole, healthy foods that give kids the right balance of nutrients, while reducing added sugars and sodium.



Fruits

Every school lunch includes fruit. Only half of the fruits offered may be 100% juice, since whole and cut-up fruits have more fiber.



Vegetables

A variety of vegetables helps kids get the nutrients and fiber they need for good health.



Grains

Whole grains give kids and teens B vitamins, minerals, and fiber to help them feel fuller longer so they stay alert to concentrate at school.



Milk

Kids and teens need the calcium, protein, and vitamin D found in milk for strong bones, teeth and muscles.



Protein Foods

Meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, peas, eggs, nuts, and seeds provide many nutrients including protein and iron. Portion sizes are based upon the nutrition needs of children in various grade groups. School meals also allow cheese, tofu, and yogurt to count as the meat/meat alternate in the school lunch.



Visit fna.usda.gov/teamnutrition for additional tips and activities.



HOW DOES SCHOOL LUNCH

Help Families?



Provides a balanced meal

It meets one-third of the nutrition needs of most children for the day.



Helps kids learn where foods come from

Farm to school programs are in 74 percent of schools, which increase kids' access to locally produced foods and learning activities, such as farmers' visits and school gardening.



Saves time

If you spend 10 minutes a day packing lunch, that adds up to 30 hours (1,800 minutes) each school year.



Supports learning at school

Research shows that kids with healthier eating patterns have better academic performance.

"We grow fruits and vegetables in our school greenhouse, which are harvested and given to the cafeteria to serve on the salad bar. It's great because the landscaping class gets involved, the leadership classes get involved, and even all the marketing plan classes get involved."

-Nebraska student

How can families help their children enjoy school lunch?

1

Try new foods at home. Kids need many opportunities to taste a new food to "get used to it."

2

Talk with your child about what's on the menu. Make sure he or she knows about all the foods that are included in his or her school lunch.

3

Eat lunch at school with your child. Learn more about what's offered and meet school nutrition staff.

4

Encourage your child or teen to join in taste-testing events or surveys about school lunch, when available.



The Dietary Guidelines offer recommendations for healthy eating and serve as the foundation for federal nutrition programs and policies, including school meal programs. You can explore the 2025–2030 Dietary Guidelines at **RealFood.gov**.

The National School Lunch Program is a federally assisted meal program operating in public and nonprofit private schools—including charter schools—and residential child care institutions. It provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to children each school day.

Learn more at www.fna.usda.gov/nslp

