



How Do They Compare? Child Nutrition Programs' Meal Pattern Requirements

*Please note: This chart only addresses meals served to children age 1 year and older as well as adults. It does not address the infant meal pattern requirements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) (jointly referred to as School Meal Programs). Additionally, the chart is based on the updated Child and Adult Care Food Program meal patterns and the updated pre-school meal patterns in the School Meal Programs. The updated meal patterns went into effect October 1, 2017.

Meal Pattern Requirements for Milk

Meal Pattern Requirement	Child and Adult Care Food Program (and Schools' pre-k meal patterns)	School Meal Programs (NSLP and SBP)	K-12 Afterschool Snack Service (under NSLP)	Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)
Fat content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 year olds: whole milk • 2 year olds and older: low-fat or fat-free milk • Yogurt may be served in place of milk once per day for adults only 	Low-fat or fat-free	Low-fat or fat-free	No restrictions
Flavored milk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prohibited for children 0 through 5 years old • Must be fat-free when served to children 6 years old and older and adults 	Must be fat-free (exemptions allowed for low-fat flavored milk through school year 2017-2018)	Must be fat-free	No restrictions



Meal Pattern Requirement	Child and Adult Care Food Program (and Schools' pre-k meal patterns)	School Meal Programs (NSLP and SBP)	K-12 Afterschool Snack Service (under NSLP)	Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)
Non-dairy beverages (Fluid Milk Substitutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-dairy beverages that are nutritionally equivalent (defined by regulation) to cow's milk may be served to participants with special dietary needs; must be requested in writing by a parent/guardian, adult participant, or a person on behalf of the adult participant • Breastmilk may be served in lieu of fluid milk; a written request is not required • Other beverages, including water, may not be offered in place of milk as part of the reimbursable meal or snack 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-dairy beverages that are nutritionally equivalent (defined by regulation) to cow's milk may be served to non-disabled students with medical or special dietary needs; must be requested in writing by a parent/guardian • Other beverages, including water, may not be offered in place of milk as part of the reimbursable meal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-dairy beverages that are nutritionally equivalent (defined by regulation) to cow's milk may be served to non-disabled students with medical or special dietary needs; must be requested in writing by a parent/guardian • Other beverages, including water, may not be offered in place of milk as part of the reimbursable snack 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not allowed for SFSP sponsors • School sponsors claiming meals under SFSP may serve non-dairy beverages that are nutritionally equivalent (defined by regulation) to cow's milk may be served to non-disabled students with medical or special dietary needs; must be requested in writing by a parent/guardian or licensed health care professional • Other beverages, including water, may not be offered in place of milk as part of the reimbursable meal or snack



Meal Pattern Requirements for Vegetables and Fruit

Meal Pattern Requirement	Child and Adult Care Food Program (and Schools' pre-k meal patterns)	School Meal Programs (NSLP and SBP)	K-12 Afterschool Snack Service (under NSLP)	Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)
Components	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vegetables and fruit are one component at breakfast Vegetables and fruits are two separate components at lunch, supper, and snack 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only the fruit component is required at breakfast; vegetables may be offered as long as 2 cups/week of under consumed vegetables (dark green, red/orange, beans and peas, or other vegetables) are included on the weekly breakfast menu Vegetables and fruits are two separate components at lunch 	Vegetables and fruit are one component	Vegetables and fruit are one component at all meals and snacks
Vegetable Subgroups	No requirement	Must offer specific serving amount of each vegetable subgroup (dark green vegetables, red-orange vegetables, beans and peas, starchy vegetables, other vegetables) over the course of a week (NSLP only)	No requirements	No requirements
Full-strength juice (100% juice)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May count towards the entire vegetable or fruit component no more than once per day Juice may not be served at snack when milk is served as the only other component 	May count towards no more than half of the vegetables or fruits offered over the week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May count towards the entire vegetable/fruit component Juice may not be served at snack when milk is served as the only other component 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May count towards no more than half of the vegetable/fruit requirement at lunch and supper Juice may not be served at snack when milk is served as the only other component



Meal Pattern Requirement	Child and Adult Care Food Program (and Schools' pre-k meal patterns)	School Meal Programs (NSLP and SBP)	K-12 Afterschool Snack Service (under NSLP)	Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)
Crediting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dried fruit credit as twice the amount served (¼ cup dried fruit = ½ cup fruit) • Raw leafy greens credit for half the amount served (1 cup of raw leafy greens = ½ cup vegetable) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dried fruit credit as twice the amount offered (¼ cup dried fruit = ½ cup fruit) • Raw leafy greens credit for half the amount offered (1 cup of raw leafy greens = ½ cup vegetable) 	All fruits and vegetables are credited based on volume served with the exception of tomato paste and tomato puree which credit based on yields found in the Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ¼ cup dried fruit = ¼ cup fruit • ½ cup raw leafy greens = ½ cup vegetable

Meal Pattern Requirements for Grains

Meal Pattern Requirement	Child and Adult Care Food Program (and Schools' pre-k meal patterns)	School Meal Programs (NSLP and SBP)	K-12 Afterschool Snack Service (under NSLP)	Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)
Whole grain-rich	Must serve at least one whole grain-rich food per day	All grains offered must be whole grain-rich (exemptions allowed through school year 2017-2018)	No whole grain-rich requirement	No whole grain-rich requirement
Grain-based desserts	Grain-based desserts cannot count toward the grain requirement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to 2 ounce equivalents of grain-based desserts per week may be offered as part of the grains component at lunch No restrictions at breakfast 	Sweet snack foods should not be served more than twice a week	Allowed only at snacks and breakfast meals
Breakfast cereals	Must contain no more than 6 grams of sugar per dry ounce	No sugar limit – the cap is generated by the dietary specifications for the weekly menu	No sugar limit	No sugar limit
Crediting	Based on ounce equivalents (starting October 1, 2019)	<p>Based on ounce equivalents</p> <p>Non-creditable grains (e.g. bran, germ, etc.) are limited to no more than 2% or less than 0.25 ounce equivalents per portion</p>	Based on ounce equivalents	Based on serving sizes



Meal Pattern Requirements for Meat/Meat Alternates

Meal Pattern Requirement	Child and Adult Care Food Program (and Schools' pre-k meal patterns)	School Meal Programs (NSLP and SBP)	K-12 Afterschool Snack Service (under NSLP)	Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)
Tofu	Allowed as a meat alternate. Must contain 5 grams of protein per 1.0 ounce equivalent (¼ cup or 2.2 ounces by weight)	Allowed as a meat alternate. Must contain 5 grams of protein per 1.0 ounce equivalent (¼ cup or 2.2 ounces by weight)	Allowed as a meat alternate. Must contain 5 grams of protein per 1.0 ounce equivalent (¼ cup or 2.2 ounces by weight)	Not creditable
Yogurt (including soy yogurt)	Must contain no more than 23 grams of sugar per 6 ounces	No sugar limit per product – the cap is generated by the dietary specifications for the weekly menu	No sugar limit	No sugar limit
Meat/meat alternates in place of grains <u>at breakfast</u>	May substitute meat/meat alternate for the entire grain component no more than 3 times per week	May substitute 1 ounce equivalent meat/meat alternate for 1 ounce equivalent grains after the minimum daily grains requirement is met, or it may be served as an extra within the dietary specifications for the weekly menu	Not applicable	May be served as an extra food item



Dietary Specifications

Meal Pattern Requirement	Child and Adult Care Food Program (and Schools' pre-k meal patterns)	School Meal Programs (NSLP and SBP)	K-12 Afterschool Snack Service (under NSLP)	Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)
Dietary specifications	Sugar limits on breakfast cereals and yogurt (see above)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meals must, on average, meet weekly limits for calories, saturated fat, and sodium• Food products served in meals must contain zero grams of trans fat	No dietary specifications	No dietary specifications



Meal Service Options

Meal Pattern Requirement	Child and Adult Care Food Program (and Schools' pre-k meal patterns)	School Meal Programs (NSLP and SBP)	K-12 Afterschool Snack Service (under NSLP)	Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)
Offer Versus Serve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allowed in adult day care centers and at-risk afterschool programs, only. At lunch or supper, participants must select at least 3 food components out of the 5 components offered; at breakfast, at least 4 food items must be offered and participants must select 3 items No ½ cup vegetable or fruit requirement Not allowed at snack service Not allowed in pre-k 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Required in high schools. At lunch, students must select at least 3 food components out of the 5 components offered; at breakfast, menu planner must offer 4 food items and students must select 3 food items. Students must select at least ½ cup of fruit and/or vegetable at breakfast and lunch Optional for middle and elementary schools Not allowed at snack service 	Not allowed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allowed at all SFSP sites, regardless of location type or sponsorship. At lunch, children must select 3 food components out of the 4 components offered; at breakfast, at least 4 food items must be offered and children must select 3 items No ½ cup vegetable or fruit requirement Not allowed at snack service
Family Style Meals	Allowed in all CACFP settings	Allowed in all schools and RCCIs	Allowed in all afterschool snack settings	Allowed only at camps and closed enrolled sites