

Meal Pattern and Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs, effective July 1, 2025

Yellow highlights indicate changes required by the Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans final rule

Meal Pattern Components	Breakfast Meal Pattern			Lunch Meal Pattern		
	Grades K-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12	Grades K-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
	Amount of Food a Per Week (Minimum Per Day)					
Fruits (cups) ^{a,b}	5 (1) ^c	5 (1) ^c	5 (1) ^c	2½ (½)	2½ (½)	5 (1)
Vegetables (cups) ^{a,b,c}	No requirement, may substitute veg for fruit.			3¾ (¾)	3¾ (¾)	5 (1)
Dark green ^d	0	0	0	½	½	½
Red/Orange ^d	0	0	0	¾	¾	1¼
Beans, Peas, Lentils ^d	0	0	0	½	½	½
Starchy ^d	0	0	0	½	½	½
Other ^{d,e}	0	0	0	½	½	¾
Additional Veg to Reach Total ^f	0	0	0	1	1	1½
Grains (oz eq) ^g	7-10 (1)	8-10 (1)	9-10 (1)	8-9 (1)	8-10 (1)	10-12 (2)
Meats/Meat Alternates (oz eq) ^h	No requirement, may substitute MMA for Grains			8-10 (1)	9-10 (1)	10-12 (2)
Fluid milk (cups) ⁱ	5 (1)	5 (1)	5 (1)	5 (1)	5 (1)	5 (1)
	Other Specifications: Daily Amount Based on the Average for a 5-Day Week					
Min-max calories (kcal) ^j	350-500	400-550	450-600	550-650	600-700	750-850
Saturated fat (% of total calories) ^j	< 10	< 10	< 10	< 10	< 10	< 10
Sodium Target 1A (mg) ^{i,k}	≤540	≤600	≤640	≤1,100	≤1,225	≤ 1,280
Sodium Target SY 2027-2028 ^{i,k}	≤485	≤535	≤570	≤935	≤1,035	≤1,080
Added Sugars^l	Product-based limits on breakfast cereals, yogurt, and flavored milk as of July 1, 2025 Weekly limit of 10% added sugar effective July 1, 2027					

- ^a Food items included in each group and subgroup and amount equivalents. Minimum creditable serving is 1/8 cup. Traditional indigenous foods (for example yams, plantains, sweet potatoes, and buffalo) may be used in school meals.
- ^b One quarter cup of dried fruit counts as 1/2 cup of fruit; 1 cup of leafy greens counts as 1/2 cup of vegetables. No more than half of the fruit or vegetable offerings may be in the form of juice. All juice must be 100% full-strength.
- ^c Schools must offer 1 cup of fruit daily and 5 cups of fruit weekly. At breakfast, vegetables may be substituted for fruits. Effective SY2025-2026, if vegetable substitution is one day per week, vegetable may be substituted for fruit from any vegetable subgroup. If two or more days per week vegetables will be substituted for fruit, at least two vegetable subgroups must be planned.
- ^d Larger amounts of these vegetables may be served. In School Food Authorities that are tribally operated, BIE operated, or primarily serve American Indian or Alaska Native children, vegetables may be substituted to meet the grain requirement.
- ^e This category consists of “Other vegetables” as defined in 7 CFR 210.10(c)(2)(iii)(E). For the purposes of the NSLP, the “Other vegetables” requirement may be met with any additional amounts from the dark green, red/orange, and beans/peas/lentils vegetable subgroups.
- ^f Any vegetable subgroup may be offered to meet the total weekly vegetable requirement.
- ^g At least 80% of the weekly grains must be whole grain-rich; the remaining weekly grains planned must be enriched. Meat/meat alternates may be substituted for grains at breakfast,
- ^h Beans, peas, and lentils may be planned to meet either the vegetable subgroup requirement or the meat/meat alternates requirement but cannot count toward both requirements in the same meal. Beans, peas, and lentils credited as meat/meat alternates may count toward the weekly vegetable subgroup requirement. There is no meat/meat alternate requirement at breakfast, menu planners may substitute some or all grains with meat/meat alternate.
- ⁱ Two milk choices must be offered at meal service. All fluid milk must be fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1 percent fat or less). Milk may be unflavored or flavored provided that unflavored milk is offered at each meal service. This requirement also applies to Special Milk Program for children ages 6 and older and Smart Snacks in School.
- ^j The average daily calories for a 5-day school week menu must be within the range (at least the minimum and no more than the maximum values). Discretionary sources of calories (solid fats and added sugars) may be added to the meal pattern if within the specifications for calories, saturated fat, added sugars, and sodium. Foods of minimal nutritional value and fluid milk with fat content greater than 1 percent milk fat are not allowed.
- ^k Sodium Target 1A is effective July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2027 (SY2026-2027). Effective July 1, 2027, Sodium requirements will reduce by 10% at breakfast and by 15% at lunch.
- ^l Product-based added sugar limits for breakfast cereals, yogurt, and flavored milk in NSLP and SBP as of July 1, 2025. Product-based limit for flavored milk also applies to Smart Snacks in School. Weekly 10% limit of added sugars in NSLP and SBP with an implementation date of July 1, 2027.