

Crediting **Fluid Milk** in the **Child Nutrition Programs** Tip Sheet



Fluid milk is a required component for reimbursable meals in Child Nutrition Programs (CNP) such as the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), the School Breakfast Program (SBP), the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). Fluid milk must be offered at each breakfast, lunch, or supper meal service. Program operators have the option to serve fluid milk as one of the two components of a snack served in the SFSP, CACFP, and in the NSLP afterschool snack service (NSLP afterschool snacks).

What Is Milk?

- **Fluid milk** refers to pasteurized fat-free (skim) milk; low-fat (1%) milk; reduced-fat (2%) milk; whole milk; lactose-free milk; lactose-reduced milk; cultured milk, such as cultured buttermilk, cultured kefir milk, and cultured acidophilus milk; acidified milk, such as acidified kefir milk and acidified acidophilus milk; and Ultra High Temperature (UHT) milk: all of which meet State and local standards for such milk.
- **Milk substitutes** must be nutritionally equivalent to milk and provide specific levels of calcium, protein, vitamins A and D, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, riboflavin, and vitamin B-12.



More training, menu planning, and nutrition education materials can be found at TeamNutrition.USDA.gov.

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Milk Types Allowed by Program

A serving of milk must be at least ¼ cup (or 2 fl oz) in order to credit toward the milk requirement.

School Meals, Child and Adult Care Food Program, NSLP Afterschool Snack Service

Age (Grade)	Milk Type
12–23 months	 Unflavored: Whole
2–5 years	 Unflavored: Low-fat (1%)/Fat-free (skim)
6–Adult (K–12)	 Unflavored: Low-fat (1%)/Fat-free (skim) Flavored: Low-fat (1%)/Fat-free (skim)*



***Note:**

CACFP and NSLP afterschool snacks: Flavored milk may be served to children ages 6 years and older.


School Meals (NSLP, SBP) only: Schools must offer at least two different options of fluid milk; at least one of them must be unflavored milk.

By July 1, 2025, flavored milk must have no more than 10 grams added sugars per 8 fl oz.

Milk Transition for Infants and Preschoolers

- Iron-fortified formula may be served to children between the ages of 12 months and 13 months to help with the transition to whole milk.
- Breastmilk may be used to meet the fluid milk component in the CACFP meal pattern.
- Unflavored whole milk and reduced-fat (2%) milk may be served to children between the ages of 24 and 25 months to help with the transition to fat-free milk or low-fat (1%) milk.

Summer Food Service Program

Age	Milk Type
All Ages	 Unflavored: Whole/Reduced-fat (2%)/ Low-fat (1%)/Fat-free (skim) Flavored: Whole/Reduced-fat (2%)/ Low-fat (1%)/Fat-free (skim)

Minimum Milk Requirements by Age or Grade

Program	Age in years	Grade	Minimum amount
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CACFP • Preschool • NSLP Afterschool Snack 	1–2	N/A	4 fl oz
<p>Meals only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CACFP Meals • Preschool Meals 	3–5	N/A	6 fl oz
<p>Snack only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CACFP Snack • Preschool Snack • NSLP Afterschool Snack 	3–5	N/A	4 fl oz
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CACFP • NSLP Afterschool Snack • SFSP* 	6 and older (includes Adult participants)	N/A	8 fl oz
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSLP/SBP 	N/A	K–12	8 fl oz

*State agencies may authorize SFSP sponsors to follow CACFP meal pattern requirements for children under age 6, which include smaller serving sizes than the 8 fl oz indicated in the SFSP.

Tips to Remember

- ✓ Fluid Milk **must be** offered at each meal.
- ✓ Fluid milk **may be** offered as one of the two required meal components at snack; however, the other required meal component must not be a beverage.
- ✓ At breakfast and snack, fluid milk may be offered as a beverage, on cereal, or both.
- ✓ At lunch and supper, fluid milk must be offered as a beverage.
- ✓ Special note for CACFP Adult Participants only
 - Fluid milk is optional at supper.
 - 6 oz or $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of yogurt may be served in place of 8 fl oz of milk once per day when yogurt is not served as a meat alternate in the same meal.



Milk Substitutes



- ✓ Nondairy beverages offered as fluid milk substitutes may also be offered in CNP (except for SFSP). However, they must be nutritionally equivalent to fluid milk and provide certain amounts of specific nutrients.
- ✓ If a milk substitute is desired for a child, the parent/guardian must request the substitute in writing, and the milk substitute must be nutritionally equivalent to milk.



Nutrient Requirements for Fluid Milk Substitutes/Nondairy Beverages

Nutrient	Per Cup (8 fl oz)
Calcium	276 milligrams
Protein	8 grams
Vitamin A	150 micrograms retinol activity equivalents (RAE)
Vitamin D	2.5 micrograms
Magnesium	24 milligrams
Phosphorus	222 milligrams
Potassium	349 milligrams
Riboflavin	0.44 milligrams
Vitamin B-12	1.1 micrograms

Nutrient Requirements for Fluid Milk Substitutes/Nondairy Beverages (Continued)

Not all “milk” is created equal. Drinks made with nuts, rice, or coconuts often contain little or no protein. Nondairy beverages that are **not** nutritionally equivalent to cow’s milk are not a creditable replacement for milk in the CNP. In general, only certain nondairy beverages meet the nutrient standards for nondairy fluid milk substitutes.

Nondairy fluid milk substitutes that are not nutritionally equivalent to fluid milk may only credit toward a reimbursable meal or snack with a medical statement from a State licensed healthcare professional or Registered Dietitian/Registered Dietitian Nutritionist. Most commercial almond, coconut, and rice beverages are **not** nutritionally equivalent to fluid milk.



Milk Products That Do Not Contribute Toward Meal Pattern Requirements

- ✗ Canned Evaporated Milk & Dry Milk**
- ✗ Cream
- ✗ Cream Soups & Sauces
- ✗ Custards/Puddings
- ✗ Eggnog
- ✗ Frozen Yogurt
- ✗ Half & Half
- ✗ Ice Cream
- ✗ Ice Milk/Sherbet/Sorbet
- ✗ Imitation & Ultra-Filtered Milk
- ✗ Pudding Pops
- ✗ Raw Milk (including certified raw milk)
- ✗ Sour Cream
- ✗ Sweetened Condensed Milk

**Canned evaporated milk and dry milk may be creditable as reconstituted milk under certain conditions of limited fluid milk availability. Check with your State agency for more information.

Crediting of Fluid Milk in Smoothies for Child Nutrition Programs

Smoothies containing milk may be offered as part of reimbursable meals and snacks in Child Nutrition Programs. Smoothies can be prepared in-house or commercially. Some ingredients in smoothies, including fluid milk, may credit as long as there is documentation showing how the product meets meal pattern requirements. The type of milk used in the smoothie must be consistent with the policies for the program, meal, and age group being served.



Commercially prepared smoothies

Acceptable forms of documentation include Product Formulation Statements (PFS) or CN labels for commercially prepared smoothies.



In-house smoothies

Smoothies prepared in-house must be documented with a standardized recipe. It is important to use a standardized recipe to make sure it produces the same amount of smoothie each time it is prepared. The standardization process can also help schools determine how the smoothie credits toward meal pattern requirements.



Crediting

Smoothies must contain at least $\frac{1}{4}$ cup (or 2 fl oz) of fluid milk per serving in order to credit toward the milk component. If the smoothie contains less than the minimum amount of fluid milk required, additional fluid milk must be offered. For example, schools are required to offer 8 fl oz of milk at meals to each student in grades K–12. If the school offers smoothies that provide 4 fl oz of milk per smoothie, the school must offer at least another 4 fl oz of milk to each student during the same meal and at least one must be unflavored milk, either fat-free or low-fat.

For more information on smoothies, check out:

- ✓ “Smoothies Offered in Child Nutrition Programs” (<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/smoothies-offered-child-nutrition-programs>)
- ✓ Team Nutrition’s “Offering Smoothies as Part of Reimbursable School Meals” (<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/offering-smoothies-part-reimbursable-school-meals>)

Note: Milk used in preparation of menu items other than smoothies does not credit toward the fluid milk requirement.





Test Your Knowledge!

True or False

1. Fluid milk used as an ingredient in recipes (other than smoothies) can credit toward the fluid milk requirement.
 True False
2. In the CACFP, a serving of fluid milk is optional at supper for adult participants.
 True False
3. Fluid milk is not a required meal component at breakfast, lunch, or supper meal service.
 True False



Multiple Choice

4. Which milk product does not contribute toward the meal pattern requirements for CNP?
 A. Sweetened condensed milk
 B. Unflavored low-fat (1%) milk
 C. Certified raw milk
 D. A & C
5. When crediting milk in smoothies, what is the minimum amount of milk required per serving?
 A. 1/2 cup C. 1/4 cup
 B. 1 cup D. 1/8 cup
6. What is the minimum required amount of milk to offer children ages 3–5 years in the CACFP and Preschool breakfast, lunch, and supper?
 A. 4 fl oz C. 6 fl oz
 B. 8 fl oz D. 2 fl oz



Answers

True or False

- Fluid milk used as an ingredient in recipes (other than smoothies) can credit toward the fluid milk requirement.
 - True
 - False: Milk used in preparation of menu items other than smoothies does not credit toward the fluid milk requirement.**
- In the CACFP, a serving of fluid milk is optional at supper for adult participants.
 - True: A serving of fluid milk is optional for supper served to adult participants in the CACFP.**
 - False
- Fluid milk is not a required meal component at breakfast, lunch, or supper meal service.
 - True
 - False: Fluid milk is a required component for reimbursable meals in Child Nutrition Programs (CNP). Fluid milk is not required for adult participants in the CACFP at supper.**



Multiple Choice

- Which milk product does not contribute toward the meal pattern requirements for Child Nutrition Programs?
 - A. Sweetened condensed milk
 - B. Unflavored low-fat (1%) milk
 - C. Certified raw milk
 - D. A & C**
Sweetened condensed milk does not meet the definition of fluid milk. Raw milk is not pasteurized and therefore does not meet regulations requiring the use of pasteurized milk.
- When crediting milk in smoothies, what is the minimum amount of milk required per serving?
 - A. 1/2 cup
 - B. 1 cup
 - C. 1/4 cup**
The minimum creditable amount of milk is 1/4 cup (or 2 fl oz fluid milk).
 - D. 1/8 cup
- What is the minimum required amount of milk to offer children ages 3–5 years in the CACFP and Preschool breakfast, lunch, supper?
 - A. 4 fl oz
 - B. 8 fl oz
 - C. 6 fl oz**
The minimum milk required for children ages 3–5 years in CACFP and Preschool meals is 6 fl oz of milk at meals.
 - D. 2 fl oz