

CHILD MEAL PATTERN

Preschool Lunch Meal Pattern [Select all five components for a reimbursable meal]			
Meal components and food items ¹	Minimum quantities		
	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-5	Ages 6-18
Fluid Milk	4 fluid ounces ²	6 fluid ounces ³	For K-12 meal pattern requirements, refer to the NSLP meal pattern requirements.
Meat/meat alternates^{4, 5}	1 ounce equivalent	1 ½ ounce equivalents	
Vegetables^{6, 8}	1/8 cup	1/4 cup	
Fruits⁶	1/8 cup	1/4 cup	
Grains^{7, 8}	½ ounce equivalent	½ ounce equivalent	

¹ Must serve all five components for a reimbursable meal.

² Must serve unflavored whole milk to children age 1.

³ Effective June 8, 2026, fluid milk served to children ages 2 through 5 may be unflavored whole, reduced-fat (2%), low-fat (1%), or fat-free milk.

⁴ Nuts and seeds may credit for the full meats/meat alternates component, although it is not required. Program operators may choose to offer nuts and seeds toward only a portion of the component, alongside another meat/meat alternate.

Nuts and seeds are generally not recommended to be served to children ages 1 to 3 because they present a choking hazard. If served to very young children, nuts and seeds should be finely minced. Program operators should also be aware of food allergies among participants and take the necessary steps to prevent exposure.

USDA encourages program operators to offer nuts, seeds, and their butters in their most nutrient-dense form, without added sugars and salt, and schools must consider the contribution of these foods to the weekly limits for calories, saturated fat, and sodium.

⁵ Alternate protein products must meet the requirements in [Appendix A to Part 226](#). Yogurt must contain no more than 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces (2 grams of added sugars per ounce). Information on crediting meats/meat alternates may be found in FNS guidance.

⁶ One-quarter cup of dried fruit counts as ½ cup of fruit; 1 cup of raw leafy greens counts as ½ cup of vegetables. Juice must be pasteurized. Full-strength juice may only be offered to meet the vegetable or fruit requirement at one meal or snack, per day. A vegetable may be offered to meet the entire fruit requirement. When two vegetables are served at lunch or supper, two different kinds of vegetables must be served.

⁷ Must serve at least one whole grain-rich serving, across all eating occasions, per day. Grain-based desserts may not be used to meet the grains requirement. Breakfast cereal must contain no more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce. Information on crediting grain items may be found in FNS guidance.

⁸ All schools in Guam and Hawaii are allowed to substitute vegetables for the grains or bread component. However, USDA emphasizes the importance of traditional and culturally relevant vegetables. Examples of traditional and cultural vegetables, such as breadfruit and taro, are provided in the revised regulatory text at [7 CFR 210.10\(c\)\(3\)](#), [220.8\(c\)\(3\)](#), [225.16\(f\)\(3\)](#), and [226.20\(f\)](#).

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