

Federal Nutritional Guidelines

The USDA's Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) is a federal program that provides nutritional guidelines for schools, child care centers, and senior centers based on recommendations from the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the National Academy of Medicine. The goal of CACFP is to provide nutritious, well-rounded, and culturally diverse food offerings that are lower in overall sugar, fat, and sodium and include no fried or par fried foods.

Food Components

Food components are grouped into 4 categories, encouraging nutrient-dense foods within each food component served. Nutrient dense foods contain high amounts of beneficial nutrients in proportion to its portion size.

- **Grains** – Whole grains are recommended. At least 2 whole-grain rich grain items are required daily on the menu (e.g., oatmeal, brown rice, whole grain bread).
- **Fluid Milk** – Low fat milk (1%) or fat free milk is required for ages 24 months and older; whole milk is required for ages 12-24 months.
- **Meat/Meat Alternates (Proteins)** – Lean meat, poultry, and fish are recommended. Also, vegetarian item such as beans, lentils, eggs, nut-free butters, seeds, tofu, and cheese can be used as protein sources.
- **Fruit & Vegetables** – All types of fruits and vegetables are allowed including fresh, canned (packed in water or 100% juice), and frozen. Different colored fruits and vegetables are recommended to provide a wide range of vitamins and minerals as well as seasonal/local produce.

Meal Patterns

Each food component served at meals and snacks has a minimum serving amount required children 1-2 years, 3-5 years, and 6-12 years. Second helpings should always be available. For more information on portion sizes, see BrightWeb/Resources/Food Connection/Resources.

Breakfast – choose one from each component

- Fluid Milk,
- Fruit or Vegetable,
- Grains: Meat/Meat Alternate may be used to meet the grain requirement up to 3 times per week.

Lunch - choose one from each component

- Fluid Milk,
- Fruit or Vegetable: can serve 1 fruit and 1 vegetable or 2 vegetables; however, 2 fruits cannot be served. If serving 2 vegetables, these must be different types of vegetables (for example, no white potato and sweet potato may be served)
- Meat/Meat Alternate, and
- Grain

Snack – Choose at least 2 components (always include a fruit or vegetable)

- Fluid Milk,
- Fruit or Vegetable,
- Meat/Meat Alternate, and
- Grain