

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Nutrition Guidelines and Menu Planning



How to Use this Factsheet

This factsheet is designed to help CACFP Sponsors and Participating Sites understand nutrition guidelines and menu planning. For more information on the CACFP program and how to participate, please review the *How to Participate in CACFP Factsheet*, available on the **NDA CACFP website**.

CACFP meal pattern requirements were updated October 1, 2017. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Nevada Department of Agriculture (NDA) have published many resources detailing these updated nutrition guidelines, meal patterns, and meal planning standards for CACFP sponsored meal service. The most relevant of these are available for review at the **NDA CACFP website**.

The information presented below provides general guidelines for meal patterns and nutrition specific to infant and child participant standards and outlines the dietary recommendations and restrictions of different food types. Keep in mind that the required portion sizes and components of each approved food type will vary by the child's age, and meal planning resources are available to CACFP participants via their sponsoring organization or NDA.



See the "Resources" call-out boxes throughout this factsheet for more information and guidance.

Meal Patterns

Required meal patterns vary between infants (<1 year old) and children (1-18 years old).



Infant meal patterns include the use of breastmilk or formula exclusively for zero to five month-old children, with more solid, healthy foods introduced around six months.



Child meal patterns detail the requirements for servings of milk, whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and meat/meat alternates.



USDA resources summarizing complete meal pattern requirements for infants and children are available in English and Spanish on the NDA CACFP website at http://agri.nv.gov/Food/Child_and_Adult_Care_Food_Program/CACFP_Resources/



This factsheet is part of a series on CACFP participation specific to early childhood education/ child care providers, funded by the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program—SNAP. The entire series, as well as information on how non-ECE providers may participate, is available on the NDA CACFP website at <http://agri.nv.gov/Food/CACFP/>. NDA is an equal opportunity employer.

Meal Planning Best Practices

CACFP Participating Sites should work with their Sponsor to keep up to date on the most current nutrition guidelines, but in general, should work to apply the following best practices when providing food to children in their care.



Overall, sites should **increase consumption of vegetables, fruits, and whole grains**, and **reduce consumption of added sugars and total fats**.



USDA recommended best practices and additional resources to support your efforts to provide healthy food to your participants is available on the NDA CACFP website at http://agri.nv.gov/Food/Child_and_Adult_Care_Food_Program/CACFP_Resources/

Meat and other Protein Sources

Lean meats, nuts, and legumes should be served preferentially, with no more than one serving of processed meat being offered each week. Natural, low-fat, or reduced-fat cheese should be served instead of cheese food or cheese spread.

Meat and meat alternates may be served in place of the entire grain component at breakfast a maximum of three times per week. Tofu may be served as a meat alternative to children.



Milk Breastmilk

Participants should support mothers who choose to breastfeed their infants by encouraging mothers to supply breastmilk or by offering a quiet, private, and sanitary area for mothers to breastfeed their children at the Participating Site. Breastmilk and formula should be given exclusively to infants zero to five months of age, and it is recommended that breastmilk be given as opposed to formula during infancy whenever possible. Solid foods should be gradually introduced around six months of age, with breastmilk or formula being retained in the diet through age 11 months.

Milk

Unflavored whole milk must be served to one year-olds; unflavored low-fat or fat-free milk to two to five years old; and unflavored low fat, unflavored fat free, or flavored fat free milk may be served to children six years or older. Please note, non-dairy milk substitutes nutritionally equivalent to milk may be served in place of milk to children with a medical or special dietary need.



Grains

Whole grains are required in child meal patterns. At least one serving of grains each day are whole grain-rich. This food is defined as at least 50% of the grain ingredients are whole grains and the remaining grains in the food are enriched, or 100% whole grain. Grain based desserts, such as granola bars, are not allowable. Note that whole grain requirements do not apply to infant meal patterns.

Vegetables and Fruit

Participants should serve a variety of fruits and vegetables and serve whole fruit rather than juice whenever possible. 100% juice is limited to once per day. It is recommended that at least one of the two required components of a snack be a vegetable or fruit.



Sugar Limitations

Sugar should be limited by:

- Avoiding serving sources of added sugars, such as syrup or honey, or sugar sweetened beverages like fruit drinks or sodas. Mix-in ingredients sold with yogurts like candy or cookie pieces are not allowed to be served at CACFP centers and homes.
- Ensuring cereal does not exceed more than six grams of sugar per dry ounce and yogurt does not exceed 23 grams of sugar per six ounce serving to meet the program standards.
- Not serving grain-based desserts (i.e. cookies, brownies, cakes).