

OFFICE OF FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICES

Nutrition Standards

Nutrition standards are the foundation of federal school nutrition programs and reflect the current Dietary Guidelines for Americans. The standards were established for menu planning by studying the nutritional needs of groups of children at different ages. Nutrition standards consist of the required food components, levels of calories, and key nutrients to meet the nutrition goals for specific age or grade groups of children for breakfast and lunch over the course of one week.

The nutrition standards include:

- Ensuring students are offered both fruits and vegetables every day of the week
- Substantially increasing offerings of whole grain-rich foods
- Offering only fat-free or low-fat milk varieties
- Limiting calories based on the age of the children being served to ensure proper portion size
- Increasing the focus on reducing the amounts of saturated fat, trans fats, and sodium.

Less than 10% of calories should be from saturated fat over a school week. Nutrition label or manufacturer specifications must indicate zero grams of trans fat per serving.

Calories

Specific calorie levels are required for school meals depending on the age/grade group. These calorie levels are based on weekly averages.

Breakfast	
Grade Levels	Calorie Ranges
K-5	350-500
6-8	400-550
9-12	450-600

Lunch	
Grade Levels	Calorie Ranges
K-5	550-650
6-8	600-700
9-12	750-850

School Breakfast Meal Pattern			
Food Components	Grade K-5	Grade 6-8	Grade 9-12
Milk	5 cups/week (1 cup daily)	5 cups/week (1 cup daily)	5 cups/week (1 cup daily)
Meat or Meat Alternates	None required but may substitute 1 oz. equivalent of meat/meat alternate for 1 oz. equivalent grains after minimum daily grain is met		
Vegetables	May be substituted for fruits, but the first 2 cups/week must be from a subgroup other than starchy (dark green, red/orange, legumes, other)		
Fruits	5 cups/week* (1 cup daily minimum)	5 cups/week* (1 cup daily minimum)	5 cups/week* (1 cup daily minimum)
Grains/Breads - Minimum - All whole grain beginning School Year 2014-2015	7 oz. equivalent/week (1 oz. daily minimum)	8 oz. equivalent/week (1 oz. daily minimum)	9 oz. equivalent/week (1 oz. daily minimum)
Minimum – Maximum Calories (kcal) Weekly average	350-500	400-550	450-600

Saturated Fat (% of total calories) Weekly average	<10%	<10%	<10%
Sodium** Weekly average	≤ 540 mg*	≤ 600 mg*	≤ 640 mg*
Trans Fat	0 grams/serving	0 grams/serving	0 grams/serving

*Effective School Year 2014-2015

**Increasingly restrictive targets in School Year 2017-2018 and School Year 2022-2023

National School Lunch Meal Pattern			
Food Components	Grade K-5	Grade 6-8	Grade 9-12
Milk	5 cups/week (1 cup daily)	5 cups/week (1 cup daily)	5 cups/week (1 cup daily)
Meat or Meat Alternates Weekly minimum	8 oz. equivalent/week (1 oz. daily minimum)	9 oz. equivalent/week (1 oz. daily minimum)	10 oz. equivalent/week (2 oz. daily minimum)
Vegetables Weekly minimum	3 ¾ cups/week (¾ cup daily minimum)	3 ¾ cups/week (¾ cup daily minimum)	3 ¾ cups/week (¾ cup daily minimum)
<i>Dark Green Subgroup</i>	½ cup/week	½ cup/week	½ cup/week
<i>Red/Orange Subgroup</i>	¾ cup/week	¾ cup/week	1 ¼ cup/week
<i>Legumes Subgroup</i>	½ cup/week	½ cup/week	½ cup/week
<i>Starchy Subgroup</i>	½ cup/week	½ cup/week	½ cup/week
<i>Other Subgroup</i>	½ cup/week	½ cup/week	¾ cup/week
Fruits	5 cups/week* (1 cup daily minimum)	5 cups/week* (1 cup daily minimum)	5 cups/week* (1 cup daily minimum)
Grains/Breads - Minimum - All whole grain beginning School Year 2014-2015	8 oz. equivalent/week (1 oz. daily minimum)	8 oz. equivalent/week (1 oz. daily minimum)	10 oz. equivalent/week (2 oz. daily minimum)
Minimum – Maximum Calories (kcal)	550-650	600-700	750-850
Saturated Fat (% of total calories) Weekly average	<10%	<10%	<10%
Sodium** Weekly average	≤ 1230 mg*	≤ 1360 mg*	≤ 1420 mg*
Trans Fat	0 grams/serving	0 grams/serving	0 grams/serving

*Effective School Year 2014-2015

**Increasingly restrictive targets in School Year 2017-2018 and School Year 2022-2023

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 established a requirement for making water available to children during meal periods.