

Lunch Meal Pattern

	Preschool	Grades K-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
Food Components	Amount of Food per Week (minimum per day)			
Fruits (cups)	1¼ (¼)	2½ (½)	2½ (½)	5 (1)
Vegetables (cups)	1¼ (¼)	3¾ (¾)	3¾ (¾)	5 (1)
Dark Green	N/A	½	½	½
Red/Orange		¾	¾	1¼
Beans and Peas (Legumes)		½	½	½
Starchy		½	½	½
Other		½	½	¾
Additional Vegetables to Reach Total		1	1	1½
Grains (ounce equivalents (oz. eq.), unless otherwise indicated)		1 ¼ slices/servings (½ slice/serving) or 1¼ cup (¼ cup)	8-9 (1)	8-10 (1)
Meats/Meat Alternates (oz. eq.)	7½ (1½)	8-10 (1)	9-10 (1)	10-12 (2)
Fluid Milk (cups)	3¾ (¾)	5 (1)	5 (1)	5 (1)
Other Specifications: Daily Amount Based on the Average for a 5-Day Week				
Min-Max Calories (kcal)	N/A	550-650	600-700	750-850
Saturated Fat (% of total calories)	N/A	<10	<10	<10
Sodium Target 1 (mg) (through SY 2023-24)	N/A	≤1,230	≤1,230	≤1,230
Sodium Target 2 (mg) (effective July 1, 2024)		≤935	≤1,035	≤1,080
Trans Fat	N/A	Nutrition label or manufacturer specifications must indicate zero grams of <i>trans</i> fat per serving. (This does not apply to naturally occurring <i>trans</i> fats, present in some meat and dairy products.)		

Smart Snacks in School

Flexibility for Entrees Served as Part of National School Lunch and School Breakfast

The Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 directed the USDA to establish nutrition standards for all foods and beverages sold to students in school during the school day. The new Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards will help schools to make the healthy choice the easy choice by offering students more of the foods and beverages we should be encouraging – whole grains, fruits and vegetables, leaner protein, lower-fat dairy – while limiting foods with too much sugar, fat and salt.

The new *Smart Snacks in School* nutrition standards apply to all foods sold to students at school outside of the federally reimbursable meals served through the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs. A less commonly thought-of food that will be subject to the new standards are entrée items served as part of the reimbursable school meal that are also sold individually to students (e.g. students that just buy an individual slice of pizza on the day it is served as part of the school lunch). School meals are science-based, nutritionally balanced and provide age-appropriate portions to children. Recognizing that components of school meals are healthier items, USDA has provided schools with the flexibility to sell certain entrée items as a la carte foods. USDA anticipates that this approach, along with the recent changes to school meals, will result in healthier menu items being offered in the a la carte line than in the past.

Highlights of the *Smart Snacks in School* nutrition standards include:

- **Allow schools to offer certain entrée items in the a la carte line.**
Schools may offer entrée items for sale as a la carte foods on the day they are served as part of the meal and the day after. These entrées would be exempt from the nutrition standards on those days in order to send a consistent nutritional message about school meals, as they already fit into a balanced and nutritionally sound meal, and represent a healthier choice for students who do not want the whole meal. This balanced approach mitigates potential confusion among parents, students and schools that a particular entrée item is healthful when sold as part of the reimbursable meal but not when the same entrée item is sold separately.
- **Provide flexibility for school food service operators to plan and prepare healthful meals.**
Allowing entrée items to be sold a la carte on the day they are served and the day after helps school food service operators to better manage their programs, including the service of leftovers, and to prevent food waste. It also helps to mitigate potential disruption that may occur from students being confused about whether particular foods being served to other students can be purchased individually.
- **Ensure that all other food and beverage items for sale in schools are healthier.**
Side items, snack foods, beverages and any entrées not served as part of a reimbursable meal will need to comply with the nutrition standards, including calorie, fat, sugar and sodium limits, in order to be sold to students in school. USDA will closely monitor this exemption during implementation to determine the overall nutrient profile of products being offered under the exemption, as well as any food safety impacts related to leftovers served à la carte.



Smart Snacks in School Beverage Options

The Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 directed the USDA to establish science-based nutrition standards for all foods and beverages sold to students in school during the school day. The new Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards will help schools to make the healthy choice the easy choice by offering students more of the foods and beverages we should be encouraging—whole grains, fruits and vegetables, leaner protein, low-fat dairy, while limiting foods with too much sugar, fat and salt.

Smart Snacks in School lays out targeted, science-based nutrition standards for beverages that reflect current nutrition science and progress being made in States and local communities across the country, as well as through existing voluntary efforts. The new standards allow variation by age group for factors such as portion size and caffeine content. While water is available on an unlimited basis, USDA has established reasonable, age-appropriate portion size standards for all other beverages in order to reinforce the important concepts of moderation and balance in student diets.

Highlights of the *Smart Snacks in School* nutrition standards include:

- **Healthier beverage options during the school day. All schools are allowed to sell:**
 - Plain water (carbonated or uncarbonated);
 - Unflavored low-fat milk;
 - Flavored or unflavored non-fat milk (and milk alternatives); and
 - 100 percent fruit and vegetable juices, and full-strength juice diluted with water, carbonated or non-carbonated, with no added sweeteners.
- **Portion sizes based on age.**

Elementary schools may sell up to 8-ounce portions of allowable milk and juice beverages, while middle and high schools may sell up to 12-ounce portions. In high schools, the standards limit the maximum container size to 12-ounces for lower calories beverages and 20 ounces for calorie-free beverages.
- **Additional options for older students.**
 - The new standards provide additional beverage options to high school students, recognizing their increased independence, relative to younger students, and the wide range of beverages available to high school students in the broader marketplace. Beyond water, milk and juice, Smart Snacks in School provides additional calorie-free and lower-calorie beverage options for high school students:
 - Calorie-free beverages, in up to 20-ounce portions; and
 - Lower-calorie beverages with up to 40 calories per 8 ounces or 60 calories per 12 ounces. These may be sold in up to 12 ounce portions.
- **Caffeinated beverages remain an option for high school students.**

The new nutrition standards do not restrict the sale of caffeinated beverages to high school students. USDA encourages school districts to exercise caution when selecting items for sale to their students. USDA will continue to monitor the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) work on caffeine and will consider revising the nutrition standards in the future as appropriate.

