

Understanding National School Lunch Program (NSLP) & School Breakfast Program (SBP) Meal Requirements

Determining Meal Requirements

The USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) create meal pattern guidelines based on the most recent Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGAs). DGAs are updated by the USDA and HHS every 5 years based on current nutrition science, public health, and best practices in scientific review and guidance development. NSLP and SBP operate separate from each other. Meal requirements are based on meal and grade. Grades are broken down into 4 groups for lunch: K-5; 6-8; K-8; 9-12. For breakfast, there are 5 groups: K-5; 6-8; K-8; 9-12; K-12. The school determines which group(s) they serve based on the school population.

Current Nutrient Standards Regulated

Breakfast

Meal components for breakfast are defined as fruit or vegetables, grains or meat/meat alternate, and fluid milk. All components must be offered daily.

- Fruit (or vegetables)
- Grains or Meat/Meat Alternate
 - 80% grains must be whole-grain rich
- Fluid Milk
 - Must be low-fat or fat-free and one must be unflavored
- Calories
- Saturated fat
 - Less than 10% of calories
- Sodium
 - Less than 540mg

Lunch

Meal components for lunch are defined as fruit, vegetables, grains, meat/meat alternate, and fluid milk. All components must be offered daily.

- Fruit
- Vegetables
 - Includes subgroups
- Grains
 - 80% must be whole-grain rich
- Meat/Meat Alternate
- Fluid Milk
 - Must be low-fat or fat-free and one must be unflavored
- Calories
- Saturated fat
 - Less than 10% of total calories
- Sodium
 - Less than 1110-1280mg depending on the group

Upcoming Changes to Meal Regulations

School Year 2025-2026

Product-based limits for breakfast cereals, yogurt, and flavored milk (Cereal < 6 g per 1 oz, Yogurt < 12 g per 6 oz, Milk < 10 g per 8 oz).

School Year 2027-2028

Breakfast

- 10% reduction from current sodium limits
 - Grades K-5: <485mg
 - Grades 6-8: <535mg
 - Grades 9-12: <570mg
- Added sugar limits
 - Less than 10% weekly calories from added sugars

Lunch

- 15% reduction from current sodium limits
 - Grades K-5: <935mg
 - Grades 6-8: <1035mg
 - Grades 9-12: <1080mg
- Added sugar limits
 - Less than 10% weekly calories from added sugars

Contact nutrition_csi@csi.state.co.us for more information or questions.