

# The School Lunch Pattern for Various Age/Grade Groups

The United States Department of Agriculture, National School Lunch Program requires that portions of meal components be adjusted by age/grade group to better meet the food and nutritional needs of children according to their ages.

Quantities Required to Offer						
Food Components	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-4	Grades K-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12	Specific Requirements
<b>Meat or Meat Alternate (M/MA)</b>			8 oz. eq./wk	9 oz. eq./wk	10 oz. eq./wk	Must be served in the main dish or as the main dish and only one other menu item.  Vegetable protein products, cheese, cheese alternate products, and enriched macaroni with fortified protein may be used to meet part of the meat/meat alternate requirement. Food and Nutrition Service Fact Sheets on each of these alternate foods give detailed instructions for use.
<b>When combining K-5 &amp; 6-8 to establish a K-8 group.</b>			<b>9 oz. eq.*/wk</b>			
Lean meat, poultry, fish	1 oz.	1 ½ oz.	1 oz. eq.* per day minimum	1 oz. eq.* per day minimum	2 oz. eq.* per day minimum	
Cheese	1 oz.	1 ½ oz.				
Large egg(s)	½	¾				
Cooked, dry beans or peas	¼ cup	3/8 cup				
Peanut butter (or any nut or seed butter)	2 Tbsp	3 Tbsp				
Peanuts, soy nuts, tree nuts or seeds*	½ oz. = 50%	¾ oz. = 50%				
Yogurt, plain or flavored, unsweetened or sweetened	4 oz. or ½ cup	6 oz. or ¾ cup				
<b>Grains / Breads</b>			8 oz. eq/wk	8 oz. eq/wk	10 oz. eq/wk	<b style="color: red;">New:</b> In grades K-12, 80% of the grains offered must be whole grain rich (WGR) or a blend of whole-grain meal and/or flour and enriched meal and/or flour of which at least 50 percent is whole grain. The remaining 50 percent or less of grains, if any, must be enriched.
<b>When combining K-5 &amp; 6-8 to establish a K-8 group.</b>			<b>8 oz. eq*/wk</b>			
Servings of grains or breads must be whole-grain rich	5 per week at least ½ svg/ day	8 per week at least 1 svg/day	1 oz. eq. per day minimum	1 oz. eq. per day minimum	2 oz. eq. per day minimum	
<b>Vegetable</b>			<b>¾ cup every day</b>		<b>1 cup every day</b>	No more than ½ of the total requirement may be met with full-strength vegetable juice.  In grades K-12 the vegetable subgroups need to be offered throughout the week. The amounts listed here are the minimum amount that must be offered during the week.
Dark Green	1/2 cup either or	1/2 cup either or	½ cup every week		½ cup every week	
Red/Orange			¾ cup every week		1 ¼ cups every week	
Beans/Peas			½ cup every week		½ cup every week	
Starchy			½ cup every week		½ cup every week	
Other			½ cup every week		¾ cup every week	
<b>Fruit</b>			½ cup every day	½ cup every day	1 cup every day	No more than ½ of the total weekly requirement may be met with 100% full-strength fruit juice.
<b>Milk (fluid offered as a beverage)</b>		¾ cup (6 fl. oz)	½ pint (8 fl. oz)			In grades K-12, fluid milk must be 1% unflavored, or fat free flavored or unflavored.
<b>Min. and Max. Calorie Ranges in an average 5-day week menu</b>		517*	550-650	600-700	750-850	Menus for students ages 1-2 and ages 3-4 have a minimum calorie requirement of 517 calories averaged over the school week.
<b>When combining K-5 &amp; 6-8 to establish a K-8 group.</b>			<b>600-650</b>			
<b>New: Sodium Target 1: Effective July 1, 2022</b>			≤ 1230	≤ 1360	≤ 1420	
<b>New: Sodium Interim Target 1A: Effective July 1, 2023</b>			≤ 1110	≤ 1225	≤ 1280	<b>K-8 group sodium max = 1110 mg.</b>

\*As listed in program guidance, these items may be used to meet no more than 50% of the requirement and must be combined in the meal with at least 50% of other meat or meat alternates (1 oz nuts/seeds = 1 oz of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish). ^Schools serving lunch 7 days per week should increase the weekly quantity by approximately 20% for each additional day. Food Buying Guide FNS Instruction 783-1, Rev. 2 Grains and Bread Instruction provide the information for the minimum weight of serving.

# Commonly eaten vegetables in each vegetable subgroup

## Dark Green Vegetables

- beet greens (canned, fresh or frozen)
- broccoli (fresh, slaw or frozen)
- collard greens (canned, fresh or frozen)
- dark green leafy lettuce
- kale (canned, fresh or frozen)
- mesclun/spring mix
- mustard greens (canned, fresh or frozen)
- romaine lettuce
- spinach (canned, fresh or frozen)
- turnip greens (canned, fresh or frozen)

## Red & Orange vegetables

- winter squash (like acorn or butternut squash)
- carrots (canned, fresh or frozen)
- pumpkin (canned or fresh)
- red peppers
- salsa
- spaghetti sauce
- sweet potatoes
- tomato paste
- tomato puree
- tomatoes (crushed, diced, whole, stewed, cherry, whole) (canned, fresh or frozen)

## Beans and peas

- baked beans, dry, canned (in sauce with pork, in sauce with bacon, vegetarian)
- bean soup
- black beans (Turtle beans), (mature, dry)
- black-eyed beans (or peas), (mature, dry)
- garbanzo beans (chickpeas), (mature, dry)
- great northern beans (dry, mature)
- kidney beans (dry, mature)
- lentils (dry, mature)
- navy beans (dry, mature)
- pea soup
- pinto beans (dry, mature)
- red bean (dry, mature)
- refried beans
- split peas (dry, mature)
- white beans (dry, mature)

## Starchy vegetables

- corn (canned, fresh or frozen)
- cowpeas, field peas, pigeon peas or black-eyed peas (green or fresh)
- green peas (fresh or frozen)
- lima beans (green or frozen)
- potato products (hash browns, hashed patty, shredded, circles, mashed, french fries frozen rounds, potato skins, potato wedges, potato sticks)
- potatoes, dehydrated (diced, flake, granules, slices), (canned fresh or frozen)

## Other vegetables

- asparagus (canned, fresh or frozen)
- avocado
- beets (canned, fresh, without tops or frozen)
- bell peppers (dehydrated, canned, fresh, or frozen)
- brussels sprouts (fresh or frozen)
- cabbage (Chinese, celery, green, red)
- cauliflower (fresh or frozen)
- celery (canned or fresh)
- cucumber
- eggplant
- green beans (flat Italian, French cut, whole) (canned, fresh or frozen)
- lettuce (iceberg; mixed greens; equal amounts of iceberg and romaine with shredded carrots and red cabbage; mostly iceberg, some romaine with shredded carrot and red cabbage; leaf)
- *mixed vegetables (broccoli and cauliflower; California blend; carrots, corn and green beans blend; peppers and onion; five vegetable blend, seven vegetable blend)*
- mushrooms (canned, fresh or frozen)
- okra (canned, fresh or frozen)
- onion (green, spinach, sweet, white, yellow, purple) (dehydrated, canned, fresh or frozen)
- radishes, without tops (fresh)
- sugar snap peas (frozen)
- summer squash (yellow or zucchini) (canned, fresh or frozen)
- turnips, without tops
- wax beans (canned, fresh or frozen)
- zucchini