

National School Lunch Program (NSLP)

Five-day Lunch Meal Patterns for Grades K-5, 6-8, and 9-12

School Year 2024-25 (July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025)

Meal components ¹	Grades K-5 Daily	Grades K-5 Weekly	Grades 6-8 Daily	Grades 6-8 Weekly	Grades 9-12 Daily	Grades 9-12 Weekly
Milk, fluid, cups ² Low-fat (1%) or fat-free milk, unflavored or flavored	1	5	1	5	1	5
Fruits, cups ³ Fruit juice: ≤ half of weekly fruits ⁴	½	2½	½	2½	1	5
Vegetables, cups ⁵ Vegetable juice: ≤ half of weekly vegetables ⁴	¾	3¾	¾	3¾	1	5
Dark green ⁶	0	½	0	½	0	½
Red/orange ⁷	0	¾	0	¾	0	1¼
Beans, peas, and lentils ⁸	0	½	0	½	0	½
Starchy ⁹	0	½	0	½	0	½
Other ¹⁰	0	½	0	½	0	¾
Additional vegetables to reach total ¹¹	0	1	0	1	0	1½
Grains, ounce equivalents (oz eq) ¹² Must be whole grain-rich (WGR) (≥ 80 percent) or enriched (≤ 20 percent) ¹³	1	8-9	1	8-10	2	10-12
Meats/meat alternates (MMA), oz eq ¹⁴	1	8-10	1	9-10	2	10-12

Dietary specifications (nutrition standards): Daily amount based on the average for a five-day week

Nutrition standards	Grades K-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
Calories ¹⁵	550-650	600-700	750-850
Saturated fat (percentage of total calories)	< 10	< 10	< 10
Sodium (milligrams): Target 1A through June 30, 2027	≤ 1,110	≤ 1,225	≤ 1,280

◀ Refer to pages 2-3 for important menu planning notes ▶

NSLP Five-day Lunch Meal Patterns for Grades K-5, 6-8, and 9-12

Menu planning notes

- ¹ Lunches must include the minimum daily and weekly servings of the five meal components and may include larger amounts if the weekly menu meets the dietary specifications. Use the USDA's [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#) (FBG) to determine how foods credit and the amount that provides the required meal pattern serving. Processed foods not listed in the FBG require a Child Nutrition (CN) label or product formulation statement (PFS) to document crediting information. For information on crediting documentation, refer to the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) resources, [Using Child Nutrition \(CN\) Labels in the School Nutrition Programs](#), [Using Product Formulation Statements in the School Nutrition Programs](#), and [Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the School Nutrition Programs](#). Foods made from scratch must have a standardized recipe that documents crediting information. For more information on crediting documentation, visit the "Crediting Commercial Processed Products" section and "Crediting Foods Made from Scratch" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage. The CSDE's training program, [What's in a Meal: National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#), provides comprehensive guidance on meeting the NSLP meal pattern and crediting requirements.
- ² Allowable types of milk include low-fat (1%) and fat-free milk, either unflavored or flavored. At least two different varieties must be offered and at least one milk choice must be unflavored. For more information, visit the "[Milk Component for Grades K-12](#)" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.
- ³ The fruits component includes fresh, frozen, and dried fruits, canned fruit in juice, water, or light syrup, and pasteurized 100 percent full-strength fruit juice. Fruits credit based on volume (cups), except dried fruits credit as twice the volume served, e.g., ¼ cup of raisins credits as ½ cup of the fruits component. For more information, visit the "[Fruits Component for Grades K-12](#)" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.
- ⁴ Fruit/vegetable juices must be pasteurized 100 percent full-strength juice. Fruit juice cannot exceed half of the weekly fruit offerings. Vegetable juice cannot exceed half of the weekly vegetable offerings. For example, if the weekly five-day lunch menu for grades 6-8 offers 2½ cups of the fruits component and 3¾ cups of the vegetables component, fruit juice cannot exceed 1¼ cups and vegetable juice cannot exceed 1⁷/₈ cups. The juice limit includes 100 percent juice, frozen pops made from 100 percent juice, pureed fruits/vegetables in smoothies, and juice from canned fruit if the menu planner credits the juice toward the fruits component. For more information, refer to the CSDE's [Crediting Juice in the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs](#) and [Crediting Smoothies for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs](#). The USDA recommends serving whole fruits instead of juice.
- ⁵ The vegetables component includes fresh, frozen, canned, and rehydrated dried vegetables, and pasteurized 100 percent full-strength vegetable juice. Vegetables credit based on volume (cups), except raw leafy greens credit as half the volume served, e.g., 1 cup of lettuce or spinach credits as ½ cup of the vegetables component. A serving of canned vegetables must be drained. Dried vegetables (such as potato flakes and dried soup mix) credit based on their rehydrated volume and require a PFS. For more information, refer to the CSDE's [Vegetable Subgroups in the National School Lunch Program](#) and visit the "[Vegetables Component for Grades K-12](#)" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.
- ⁶ Examples of the dark green subgroup include arugula, bok choy, broccoli, collard greens, dark green leafy lettuce, kale, mesclun, mustard greens, romaine lettuce, spinach, turnip greens, and watercress.
- ⁷ Examples of the red/orange subgroup include acorn squash, butternut squash, carrots, orange peppers, pumpkin, red peppers, spaghetti squash, tomatoes, tomato juice, sweet potatoes, and winter squash.
- ⁸ Examples of the beans, peas, and lentils subgroup include black beans, black-eyed peas (mature, dry), garbanzo beans (chickpeas), kidney beans, lentils, navy beans, refried beans, soybeans, split peas, and white beans. Note: Green peas, green lima beans, and green (string) beans are not in this subgroup. For more information refer to the CSDE's [Crediting Beans, Peas, and Lentils in the School Nutrition Programs](#).
- ⁹ Examples of the starchy subgroup include black-eyed peas (not dry), corn, cassava, green bananas, green peas, green lima beans, parsnips, plantains, taro, water chestnuts, and white potatoes.

NSLP Five-day Lunch Meal Patterns for Grades K-5, 6-8, and 9-12

- ¹⁰ The “other” subgroup includes all other vegetables such as artichokes, asparagus, avocado, beets, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, celery, cucumbers, eggplant, green beans, green peppers, iceberg lettuce, mushrooms, okra, onions, turnips, wax beans, and zucchini. The “other” vegetables requirement may be met with any additional amounts from the dark green subgroup, red/orange subgroup, and beans, peas, and lentils subgroup, but not the starchy subgroup.
- ¹¹ Any vegetable subgroup may be offered as additional vegetables to meet the total weekly vegetable requirements.
- ¹² The weekly grains must be at least the minimum but may exceed the maximum. The maximum provides a guide for planning meals that meet the dietary specifications. Grain products and recipes must provide the required serving weight (groups A-E) or volume (groups H-I) in the USDA’s Exhibit A chart (refer to the CSDE’s [Grain Ounce Equivalents for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#) and [How to Use the Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#)) or provide the minimum creditable grains (refer to the CSDE’s [Calculation Methods for Grain Ounce Equivalents for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#) and [When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the School Nutrition Programs](#)). For more information, visit the “Grains Component for Grades K-12” section of the CSDE’s Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage.
- ¹³ At least 80 percent of the weekly offered grains must be WGR (refer to the CSDE’s [Calculating the Weekly Percentage of Whole Grain-rich Menu Items in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#)). Foods in groups A-H of the USDA’s Exhibit A chart are WGR if: 1) they are 100 percent whole grain or contain a blend of whole and enriched grains that is at least 50 percent whole grain; and 2) noncreditable grains do not exceed 3.99 grams per portion for groups A-G or 6.99 grams per portion for group H (refer to the CSDE’s [Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#)). RTE breakfast cereals (group I) are WGR if: 1) the first ingredient is a whole grain and the cereal is fortified, or the cereal is 100 percent whole grain; and 2) noncreditable grains do not exceed 6.99 grams per portion (refer to the CSDE’s [Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs](#)). RTE breakfast cereals that are not WGR must be enriched or fortified and cannot exceed 6.99 grams of noncreditable grains per portion. Fortification is not required for 100 whole-grain RTE cereals. Grains that are not WGR must be enriched (refer to the CSDE’s [Crediting Enriched Grains in the School Nutrition Programs](#)).
- ¹⁴ MMA must be served in a main dish or a main dish and one other food item. The weekly MMA must be at least the minimum but may exceed the maximum. The maximum provides a guide for planning meals that meet the dietary specifications. The serving size refers to the edible portion of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish, e.g., cooked lean meat without bone, breading, binders, extenders, or other ingredients. A 1-oz eq serving equals 1 ounce of lean meat, poultry, or fish; 1 ounce of cheese (low-fat recommended); 2 ounces of cottage or ricotta cheese (low-fat recommended); ¼ cup of beans/peas/lentils (refer to the CSDE’s [Crediting Beans, Peas, and Lentils in the School Nutrition Programs](#)); ½ large egg; 2 tablespoons of nut/seed butters (refer to the CSDE’s [Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the School Nutrition Programs](#)); 1 ounce of nuts/seeds, e.g., almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, filberts, macadamia nuts, peanuts, pecans, walnuts, pine nuts, pistachios, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, and soy nuts; ¼ cup (2.2 ounces) of commercial tofu containing at least 5 grams of protein (refer to the CSDE’s [Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products in the School Nutrition Programs](#)); 1 ounce of tempeh; 3 ounces of surimi; ½ cup of yogurt or soy yogurt (refer to the CSDE’s [Crediting Yogurt in the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs](#)); and 1 ounce of alternate protein products (APPs) that meet the USDA requirements in [appendix A of 7 CFR 210](#) (refer to the CSDE’s [Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the School Nutrition Programs](#)). Commercial processed products that contain added ingredients (such as combination entrees, deli meats, hot dogs, and sausages) require a CN label or PFS to document crediting information (refer to the CSDE’s [Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the School Nutrition Programs](#) and [Crediting Deli Meats in the School Nutrition Programs](#)). For more information, visit the “Meats/Meat Alternates Component for Grades K-12” section of the CSDE’s Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage.
- ¹⁵ The weekly lunch menu’s average daily calories must be at least the minimum but cannot exceed the maximum. For more information on the dietary specifications, refer to section 6 of the CSDE’s [Menu Planning Guide for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#) and visit the “Dietary Specifications (Nutrition Standards for School Meals)” section of the CSDE’s [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

NSLP Five-day Lunch Meal Patterns for Grades K-5, 6-8, and 9-12

For more information on the NSLP meal patterns, refer to the CSDE's *Menu Planning Guide for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program* and *Resources for the School Meal Patterns for Grades K-12* and visit the CSDE's *Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs* and *Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs* webpages, or contact the [school nutrition programs staff](#) at the Connecticut State Department of Education, Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841. This document is available at https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/mealpattern/nslp_meal_pattern_5day.pdf

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