



Nutrition Standards for School Meals

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 required the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) to update [federal nutrition standards](#) for school meals. Schools participating in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs must meet the following standards. *Note: Due to the pandemic, states can provide [specific, targeted flexibility](#) to schools facing challenges in meeting these requirements through School Year 2021/22.*

More fruits and vegetables: Since 2012, schools offer students larger portions of fruits and vegetables with every lunch. Vegetable choices must include weekly offerings of legumes, dark green and red/orange vegetables. Every school breakfast must offer students a full cup of fruits or vegetables. Students are required to take at least one half-cup serving of fruits or vegetables with every school breakfast and lunch.

Whole grains: All grains offered with school meals must be whole grain-rich (at least 51% whole grain).

Calorie limits: School meals must meet age-appropriate calorie minimums and maximums:

Grades	Breakfast	Lunch
K-5:	350-500 calories	550-650 calories
6-8:	400-550	600-700
9-12:	450-600	750-850

Sodium limits: Schools must gradually reduce sodium levels in school meals to meet the following limits.

National School Lunch Program Sodium Reduction Limits

	Target 1 (effective July 2014)	Target 2 (CURRENT)	Final Target (July 1, 2022)
Grades K-5:	≤1,230	≤935	≤640
Grades 6-8:	≤1,360	≤1,035	≤710
Grades 9-12:	≤1,420	≤1,080	≤740

School Breakfast Program Sodium Reduction Limits

	Target 1 (effective July 2014)	Target 2 (CURRENT)	Final Target (July 1, 2022)
Grades K-5:	≤540	≤485	≤430
Grades 6-8:	≤600	≤535	≤470
Grades 9-12:	≤640	≤570	≤500

Limits on unhealthy fat: Meals cannot contain added trans-fat and no more than 10 percent of calories can come from saturated fat.

Low-fat and fat-free milk: Every school meal offers one cup of fat-free or 1% milk. Flavored milk must be fat-free. To meet calorie limits, milk processors have developed flavored milk with less added sugar.

Free water: Free drinking water must be available in the cafeteria during lunch and breakfast.