

**Optimal Medical Foundation
Childhood Disease Research Foundation**

<http://www.cdrfintl.com>

Day Care Nutrition Menu Planning



And Helpful Food Practices

Designed for Ages 1 to 5

Childhood Disease Research Foundation, division of Optimal Medical Foundation Inc, has arranged for the production and easy access of this important resource information, for pre-school childcare centers, whether large or small.

The information will guide you through the key elements of food handling & safety, food buying, preparation & storage, best practices for menu planning, sample menus and a series of nutritional ideas for both snacks and meals.

Access to other helpful websites has also been provided.

Who will benefit from this material?

This easy-to-read & explore collection of nutrition and menu planning information is primarily designed for people who own or work at a childcare centre.

Childcare centers include:

- family day homes/private residences who provide daytime care for pre-school children
- daycare centers
- nursery schools
- preschools

This information is also for parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents and all others who are taking care of young children.

A Guiding Philosophy

“Child care settings can have a big impact on children’s eating habits - what they eat, when they eat, why they eat and how they eat.

Create healthy eating environments, where healthy food is offered in ways that promote strong bodily growth, positive views towards food and healthy eating habits for life.”

“Small children –Small tummies – Small portions”

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Helpful Resources at Your Finger Tips

As a daycare provider of meals for young children, there are several sources of helpful information available to you.

Initially, it is important to explore your individual State's Agency requirements and guidelines. It is also helpful to review the USA government website for child-day-care centers. The **Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)** will help you with regulations, legislation, policies and meal requirements.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfc/child>.

CACFP offers access to helpful resources such as:

- MyPlate - <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/>
- Institute of Child Nutrition - <http://www.nfsmi.org>
- Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs - <http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-for-child-nutrition-programs>

Helpful information such as:

- Whether you are serving food to a small number of children or adults, or thousands of students, you need to think carefully about each meal.
- Will the meal meet the appropriate requirements of the various child nutrition programs?
- How many servings will you get from a specific quantity of food?
- What quantity of the raw product will provide the amount of ready-to-cook food
- What quantity of the raw product will provide the amount of ready-to-cook food called for in a recipe?
- How much food will you need to buy?
- **Healthy Meals Resource System** - <http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/>
 - o The Healthy Meals Resource System is an online information center for USDA Child Nutrition Programs (CNP) and has been delivering resources to CNP staff since 1995. Home site for Team Nutrition.
 - o The Four Food Groups

To contact or locate your State Agency go to:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/cacfp-contacts>

Click on either your State locator or insert its name into the locator.

Why is healthy food important for children?

- Eating healthy food helps children in many ways
- It helps children have energy all day long
- It helps children get the vitamins and minerals their bodies need
- Healthy food helps children's bodies grow
- It helps to form strong teeth, bones and muscles
- Healthy food helps protect children against diseases now and in the future
- It helps children develop healthy eating habits for life

Why is good menu and meal time planning important?

Menu planning for healthy eating can be a rewarding yet tricky task in child care settings. These resources will help in planning tasty and nutritious meals and snacks

Child care providers play a key role in preventing childhood obesity, by ensuring that children have access to healthy meals and snacks that meet their nutritional needs. The foods that a child care program serves to children can affect their health and well-being, and can influence their lifelong eating habits.

Children's bodies need a variety of foods daily, to get all the nutrients necessary for good health. Creating enjoyable mealtimes and snacks in a child care program will help young children learn healthy eating habits and develop positive attitudes toward food. Consider the following tips to make the meal experience positive for children, in your child care program.

- **Cycle menus** for Fall, Winter, Spring and Summer, featuring local foods in season
- **Make mealtimes pleasant.** Show your enthusiasm for healthy foods. Children will feel more comfortable if you are able to sit with them and share the time with them, while they eat. Create positive conversation and a relaxed atmosphere.
- **Remember that eating is a social time.** Children should be seated around a table so they can talk with and observe one another. Encourage all children at the table to engage conversationally with each other.

Important social learning happens during mealtime, as children learn new vocabulary and practice skills such as taking turns, and sharing. Child care providers should try to sit with children during meals when possible, to encourage this conversation and to help them learn about the foods they are eating.

- **Help children learn self-help skills.** Starting in the toddler years, children can help set the table, serve themselves, spread butter or jam on bread, stir batter, or even pour milk or water from a small pitcher.
- **Plan fun food activities to encourage children to try new foods.** Read a book about a new food and then serve the new food as a snack, when children are hungry. Let children help prepare foods. Getting children involved in food preparation will boost self-confidence and may encourage them to try the food they helped create.
- **Keep their parents informed** about what's on the menu and encourage their home support for meals prepared and eaten at the day care centre, or in your home care environment.

Things to know about - in addition to good menu planning:

- The ***Cook's Thesaurus*** is a cooking encyclopedia that covers thousands of ingredients and kitchen tools. Entries include pictures, descriptions, synonyms, pronunciations and suggested substitutions. <http://www.foodsubs.com/>
- Virtually an “All-In-One Guide “**Nutrition and Menu Planning for Children**” Florida Department of Health, for Ages 3-5, 112 pages of helpful information.
 - o Meal Pattern Requirements
 - o ‘Special Needs’ Meals
 - o Creative Menu Planning with Child Appeal
 - o Purchasing Food
 - o Teaching Healthy Eating Habitshttp://www.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/childrens-health/child-care-food-program/nutrition/_documents/nmp-workbook-2013.pdf
- **Food Purchasing Tips**
- **Food Safety Tips**
- **Food Storage**
- **Handling Guidelines for Preparing and Cooking**

Food Purchasing Tips

- Purchase only inspected meats, fresh or frozen
- Purchase 'fresh' food when there is a choice –
- Select 100-percent juices or bottled water when possible
- Select only pasteurized dairy products, juices, and honey
- Do not buy or use food in cans that are leaking or have bulges—this usually means there is an active bacteria
- Check the packaging for the “best before” and “expiry” dates
- Check the packaging for damage or tears which could have invited unwanted bugs inside
- Always check the levels of salt and sugar in the package of food being purchased - just because it says 'healthy' on the label, this is not always the case.

Be Budget Conscious:

- Purchase fresh vegetables and fruit in season
- Consider the cost of convenience
- Pre-washed and cut vegetables, fruit and other convenience foods, cost more.
- Think about which foods you will make from scratch and which ones you will buy.
- Use flyers and plan around sales
- Stock up when pasta, rice and noodles are on sale; it can be stored for years if left unopened in a dark place. If you have freezer space, buy large packages of meat when it is on sale.
- Use plant protein, yogurt
- Try serving a less expensive plant protein such as nut butters, lentils, split peas, kidney beans or other dried beans, instead of a meat dish.
- Buy and cook in bulk. Buying in bulk can save costs. Cooking in large quantities and then freezing it saves time

For a complete insight and resource for Food Buying go to:

- <http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-for-child-nutrition-programs>

Food Safety Tips:

Meal planning for those under your care starts well before lunch or snack times. It is vital that general food safety practices are implemented and followed on a consistent basis.

Safe storing, preparing and serving of foods, is just as important in childcare programs, as serving a balanced diet. Many children get sick from eating foods that are not properly handled. It's important to follow food safety guidelines carefully and to be

mindful that food safety begins with food purchasing and continues through storing, preparing, serving and cleaning up after the meals have been prepared.

Whether you are a cook in a large child care center, or a family child care provider preparing food for the children in your home, here are some guidelines for those who purchase and prepare foods for children.

Food Storage

- Put away frozen and cold foods promptly after purchasing
- Store foods in covered containers in the refrigerator
- Place thermometers in a visible location in refrigerators and freezers, and check the temperature frequently (even if it is a home-care provider environment).
 - Keep refrigerator temperature between 32 degrees – 40 degrees F
 - Keep freezer temperature at 0 degrees F or less.
- Clean the refrigerator, freezer, and dry food storage areas frequently –set up a documented schedule to be followed –it helps things get done and is a good resource for inspections or for when a parent complaint arises
- Store foods and cleaning supplies in separate cupboards
- Store cleaning supplies in a cupboard that is locked
- Once a package is opened, use clips to keep the inside packaging secure or place the contents in a sealable see through container. It does not need to be a clear view container but one which easily allows you to locate the food product in the cupboard or on a shelf
- Once a jar is opened, reseal it immediately after use and store appropriately. If you leave a lid off a jar while you are preparing other foods, there is the chance for other food particles to fall into the jar or for food cross-contamination to occur.
- Once food has been served to a child on a plate or in a bowl, do not return any of their uneaten foods to the kitchen for storage and future use/consumption by the child – this reduces the risk of cross-contamination.
- Use a storage area that is not in direct sunlight or beside a heating register
- Food storage areas should be cleaned on a regular basis with an antibacterial cleaner or hot water and soap.

Handling Guidelines When Preparing Meals for Children in Child Care

- Wash your hands often, with soap and hot water during food preparation, for at least 20 seconds before handling food. Wash your hands at any time they become contaminated, such as after coughing, sneezing and touching raw meats.
- Use sanitary, disposable gloves if using your hands to place food on trays or plates
- The best practice is to wear a hairnet while preparing food
- Wash and sanitize work counters, surfaces, cutting boards and utensils before and after use, using a sanitizing solution both before and after preparing the food (Use a sanitizing solution of 5 ml/1 tsp bleach per 750 ml/3 cups hot water.)
- Use separate cutting boards and utensils for raw meats, chicken and fish and, use a designated cutting board for fruits, vegetables and other foods
- Wash and sanitize can openers after each use
- Use paper towel to wipe up spills, clean and sanitize counters, or change dishcloths once they become soiled or contaminated (e.g. after cleaning raw meat liquids/juices).
- Wash/rinse vegetables and fruit thoroughly before preparing or eating. Even prepackaged, prewashed foods like lettuce, spinach and carrots, can still carry harmful bacteria and need to be washed.
- Cut away bruised areas on vegetables and fruits
- Put frozen meats into a pan before placing them in the refrigerator to thaw, as this will reduce direct or indirect dripping of fluids onto other foods
- Do not thaw open meats on the kitchen counter – if it needs to be thawed quickly, use cold running water
- Cook meats thoroughly, and use a food thermometer to be sure they are fully cooked to the following internal temperatures
 - Steaks and roasts: beef, veal, and lamb – 145 degrees F (63 C)
 - Ground pork, beef, veal, and lamb – 160 degrees F (71 C)
 - Whole poultry (take measurement in thigh) – 165 degrees F (74 C)
 - Fin fish – 145 degrees F (63 C) or until the flesh is opaque and separates easily with a fork

- o Do not rely on time alone to ensure a food is thoroughly cooked.
 - o Minimize the amount of time food is kept between 40°F to 140°F (4°C to 60°C).
 - o Stir foods that have been reheated to ensure even heating. The internal temperature should be at least 165°F (74°C).
 - o Use a clean food thermometer to ensure foods are cooked to the right temperature.
 - o When checking internal temperatures, insert the thermometer into several different spots.
 - o Wash and sanitize food thermometer after each use and between testing
- Do not allow pets in the kitchen when meals are being prepared and served to children
 - Do not change diapers in areas where you prepare, store, and serve foods. Even if you sanitize the counter top there is a risk of contamination
 - Discard food waste in a covered, lined garbage can and empty the garbage can at the end of the day (or sooner when full)
 - Store leftovers immediately after the meal, using sealable containers or clinging plastic wrap which also creates an air-tight container
 - Use small, shallow containers when storing or freezing food for quicker cooling and freezing
 - Avoid storing food in the same container they were cooked in
- **Avoid Cross-Contamination**
 - o **Organize kitchen space** to keep foods for food-allergic children separate from other foods. For example, label pantry and refrigerator shelves that hold foods that are “safe” for the child. Then, let others know how the kitchen is organized or place information on the pantry door.
 - o ► **Prepare foods for the food allergic child first** to prevent spreading food allergens from one surface or utensil to another. Label the foods and keep them separate from other foods.
 - o ► **Be careful to use separate utensils** when preparing and serving food to the food-allergic child. Cross-contamination from food allergens on cooking surfaces, utensils, or cooking equipment can trigger an allergic reaction in a child who has food allergies.

Dish Washing in a Child Care Setting

- If a dishwasher is used, the rinse temperature should be 180 degrees F to sanitize dishes. It is highly recommended that a dishwasher is used when possible.
- Follow these steps to wash and sanitize dishes without a dishwasher:
 - o Rinse or scrape dishes
 - o Wash in hot water, using liquid detergent

- o Rinse in clear water
- o Sanitize dishes by submerging in a solution of 1 teaspoon bleach per quart of water for one minute or in 170 degree F water, for at least 30 seconds
- o Air dry dishes rather than towel-drying them when possible. If towel drying is used, then be sure the cloth towels are clean and fresh or use paper towels. Use paper towels to wipe kitchen counter tops or clean-up table crumbs –not a sponge

Important Food Serving Practices in a Child Care Environment

- Serve foods on a plate, napkin or bowl, rather than directly on the table
- Discard cracked or chipped plates, cups and bowls
- Use serving utensils such as large spoons, tongs, or single-use food service gloves
- Teach children not to lick serving utensils. If a serving utensil is licked by a child, remove it and replace it with a clean utensil
- Give children clean utensils and napkins, if these items are dropped during the meal or snack
- Provide small children with smaller utensils, plates and bowls
- Discard all leftovers on children's plates and in serving dishes that were placed on the table where children ate their food. Do not save them for later – remember a child's hand can be faster than the eye when watching them and food in bowls can easily pick up unwanted germs

Why is Meal Planning Important?

- Meal planning is an important part of healthy eating, to ensure meals are balanced and the **four food groups** (Vegetables/Fruit, Grains/Breads, Meat/Meat Alternatives, Milk/Milk Alternatives) are provided
- Healthy eating is needed for proper growth and development
- It is never too early to start healthy habits
- Meal planning may be required for licensing by your community or state governments
- Children who are well nourished are more settled and are better able to focus and pay attention.
- Meal planning can be easy with the right tools. Planning ahead saves time, energy, money and produces less waste

- Children attending daycares, family day homes, or after school care can range in age from 1 – 12 years. Children have different nutritional needs depending on their age. Meal planning makes certain that children of different ages have their nutrition needs met.
- Good meal planning ensures the children are receiving the recommended amount of iron, Vitamin A and Vitamin C in their daily diet.
- Feeding picky eaters in day homes and daycares can be challenging, especially when children seem to be interested in a limited number of foods. Using your imagination and exercising patience, can be helpful to get through these difficult periods.
- By using menu planning, the Childcare facility can be more “nut-aware or allergy aware”.
- Menu planning can help to ensure caregivers are familiar with guidelines for supporting children with allergies and know how to respond when a child has an adverse food reaction.
- Menu planning can give guidelines to those preparing the foods, to ensure foods are cut into appropriately sized pieces and to avoid serving foods that present a high risk of choking. The supporting guidelines to the menu planning can also provide the opportunity to ensure caregivers are trained, to assist a child if they are choking.

Some children in child care have special dietary requirements. Food allergies, cultural and religious preferences, and vegetarian diets are common issues in a child care program. Child care providers, center directors and parents, need to work together in order to ensure that children with special dietary needs receive appropriate foods.

Choking Hazards

The following examples of foods, if served whole or in chunks, are considered choking hazards for children less than 4 years of age. Help make them safer by using the recommended options. There are also foods which cannot be made safe and should not be served to children age 1-3

Choking Hazard Food Item:

Nuts and seeds

Hot dogs

Whole grapes

Raisins

Chunks of meat or cheese

Hard fruit chunks (like apples)

Raw Vegetables

Nut Butters (Creamy, not chunky)

Dried Fruits or vegetables

Popcorn

Help Make it Safe By:

Chopping finely

Cutting in quarters lengthwise, then cutting into smaller pieces

Cutting in half lengthwise, then cutting into smaller pieces

Cooking in food

Chopping finely

Chopping finely, cutting into strips, steaming or mashing or pureeing

Chopping finely, cutting into strips, steaming or mashing or pureeing

Spread thinly on crackers or mixing with applesauce and cinnamon and spreading thinly on bread

Do not serve

Do not serve

Note:

Be sure all foods are cut into bite size pieces. Encourage children to chew their food completely before swallowing.

Talk with Parents about Special Dietary Needs

Planning to accommodate a child's special dietary needs should begin, before that child is enrolled in the child care program. The program director or child care provider should ask parents about food needs and family eating patterns, before enrolling their child in the program. Decide whether or not the program can provide the foods that meet the child's special dietary needs, before agreeing to enroll that child in the child care program. If the program cannot provide foods to meet the child's needs, ask the parents to provide meals and snacks that meet their child's needs, or refer the family to another child care program that can better accommodate their child's special diet requirement.

If the child has a food allergy, a doctor's note must be kept on file stating the allergy and any appropriate substitutions. If allergies are severe, ask the parents/guardians for a list of foods the child is permitted to eat.

Guidelines to Help Child Care Providers Handle Food Allergies

Food allergies are common in young children. Cow's milk is a problem for some infants and young children. Other common allergens include wheat products, peanuts, tree nuts, and eggs. Some young children also have trouble digesting high-fiber foods.

The eight most common allergens are:

Milk – Eggs –Fish –Peanuts – Shellfish – Soy – Tree nuts and Wheat

When a child with a food allergy ingests that food, he may have an allergic reaction. Allergic reactions range from mild skin sensitivity to very severe symptoms, including difficulty breathing. Because food allergies can be dangerous, or even life-threatening in some cases, child care providers must be aware of all allergies in the children, in their classroom or care group.

While peanuts are technically legumes and in a separate family from tree nuts, they are the most common and potentially dangerous allergen in a daycare environment. Introducing high allergen-risk foods should be attempted when children are a bit older and by their parents in a controlled environment. Children with peanut allergies can face dangerous and even deadly reactions from not only ingesting peanuts but even just by coming into physical contact with them. Peanut allergies are among the most common for young children which makes them a particularly high-risk food item.

The thick consistency can also present a choking risk for toddlers, even if they have no peanut allergies. - See more at: <http://childcarecenter.us/resource/foods-home-daycare-providers-should-never-serve-toddlers#sthash.LsKwOGgw.dpuf>

Here are some guidelines child care providers can use, to manage food allergies in the child care setting:

- **Discuss allergies with families when you first enroll each child.** Ask about the allergy, when it was first identified, the likely signs of an allergic reaction, and the degree of sensitivity.
- **Prepare for allergic reactions.** Be sure to ask parents how an allergic reaction should be treated. Some allergic reactions require immediate emergency medical treatment; others that are milder may be treated with over-the-counter medications. Have parents leave written instructions about how to handle an allergic reaction to specific foods.

- **Check labels carefully and pay attention to ingredients that may cause allergic reactions.** Be careful not to serve a food containing a certain ingredient to children who are allergic to that food. Some children who are allergic to certain foods may not be able to tolerate even the smallest amount used as an ingredient in other foods.
- **Avoid cross-contamination.** Some children have such severe food allergies that indirect exposure can cause allergic reactions. A child with a peanut allergy may have a reaction if you spread jelly on his sandwich with a knife that has been used to spread peanut butter, even if you rinse the knife first. Be sure to wash all tools and food preparation surfaces carefully and avoid reusing tools that have touched an allergen until they have been washed with hot water and soap and sanitized. If you have prepared food that contains an allergen, wash your hands carefully with soap and warm water before touching the child with an allergy.
- **Consider prohibiting certain foods from the child care program.** Some children have life-threatening allergies to certain foods. If a child's allergy is severe, or there are several children with the same food allergy, consider prohibiting that food in the child care setting to avoid the risk of allergic reactions. Many child care programs do not allow peanuts or tree nuts, because allergies to those foods can be severe or even life-threatening. A safe practice is simply to avoid serving peanut or other nut spreads.

Cultural, Heritage or Religious Beliefs and Food Preferences

Occasionally, a family's religious beliefs will prohibit or demand certain foods or foods at certain times. When you talk with parents before enrolling the child, ask about these special practices and discuss with the parents the best ways to accommodate these dietary changes. Knowing families' practices will help you accommodate their preferences in your child care program.

Families also may request certain foods that reflect their cultural background. Consider including some of these foods in your weekly menus, both to help children from that culture feel more comfortable and to introduce other children in the child care program to these foods that are part of their classmate's culture.

If children are old enough to understand, explain what these foods are and tell them a little about the cultural background or practices that include the foods.

Your local librarian may be able to help you locate children's books or cookbooks with pictures to share with children to help them understand about foods from different cultures.

Parents may also be willing to bring foods from their culture/heritage or to help the children prepare a new food. Including foods from different cultures as a regular part of

your menus, instead of a "special" food served only on certain days, is a more effective way to help children learn about foods eaten in different home environments.

Vegetarian Diets in Child Care

Families, who follow a vegetarian diet, may request vegetarian meals for their children. Vegetarian diets vary from family, to family.

Some children may eat poultry and fish but avoid red meat. Others may avoid all meats but eat dairy products and eggs. Still others may avoid eating all animal-based products.

Child care providers and directors should discuss the specific vegetarian diet with the parents, to decide how to accommodate the child's needs. If the menus cannot be changed completely, you may be able to make some substitutions for children who do not eat meat or other animal products.

Here is an example of a **vegetarian child care menu** that follows the guidelines of the USDA's MyPlate and the Child and Adult Care Food Program.

This menu would be appropriate for children who do not eat meat but do eat eggs and dairy products.

Breakfast:

- Oatmeal
- Milk
- Toast
- Juice

Morning snack:

- Applesauce
- Graham cracker
- Water

Lunch:

- Whole wheat roll
- Cheese omelet
- Peas
- Milk
- Kiwi slices or wedges

Afternoon Snack:

- Hummus on whole wheat bread

How many meals a day should be planned?

Your State authority/ Agency may have specific rules.

The following is a rule of thumb when there is no specific regulation.

Children in a full-day program and are in care for more than 7 hours

- one meal and two snacks during this period of time

Part-day programs are between 4 and 7 hours long

- one meal and one snack

Key to Menu Planning:

There is no right or wrong way to start planning a menu. As you 'meal plan' more often you will find what works best for you. At the outset, it is helpful to use a weekly template, depicting the day and the times you will need to provide meals or snacks.

You must also have in mind the regulated requirements of both the food portion and the types of food which must be served for a meal/lunch or a snack.

What is the difference between a meal and a snack?

What's in a meal?

A meal includes a healthy food from each of all four food groups.

Make meals appealing by offering contrasts in color, flavor and texture.

For example foods can be soft (banana), crunchy (celery sticks), crispy (apple), or smooth (yogurt).

What's in a snack?

A snack provides a healthy food from two or more of the four food groups.

Snacks should include foods that might be missed during meals, like vegetables and fruit.

Feed snacks 1 to 2 hours before or after a meal to avoid spoiling a child's appetite.

Tips for Choosing Healthy Recipes

Healthy things to have in mind when choosing recipes:

- Use healthy cooking methods like grilling, baking, broiling, poaching and steaming
 - o Have lots of vegetables and fruits
 - o Use whole grains such as whole grain flour, brown rice or whole wheat pasta
 - o Use lower fat milk alternatives (20% MF cheese, plain 2% MF yogurt)
 - o Have lean meats or meat alternatives such as lentils, beans and chickpeas
 - o Include small amounts of healthy fats such as coconut or avocado oil, and unsalted butter – avoid lard
 - o Use herbs and spices instead of salt for seasoning
 - o Limit the amount of added sugar
- Children have small appetites. Remember this when looking at how much the recipe makes.
- Think about healthy, child friendly portion sizes and the recipe might actually make double the number of servings that is suggested.
- Because little tummies get full more quickly, provide children with small meals and snacks, every 2-3 hours.
- A good menu plan includes a variety of foods and offers contrast in flavor, color and texture. Ideally, menu items should not be repeated within a two-week period.
- Plan 20 to 30 minutes for a meal time
- Plan to have meals and snacks at the same time everyday
- Be aware of how much fluid children drink during meals... he/she may be filling up on liquids. Plan to serve no more than ½ cup juice per day. Children need to drink water every day. Water should always be available. If a child says, *“I’m thirsty”* –offer water, not juices.
- Limit the use of sugary and sticky foods, especially for snacks.
- If sweet, sugary, and sticky foods are served, provide them with a meal rather than as a snack, so there will be a better food balance.
- Split food servings into smaller portions to be served throughout the day.

- Serve a variety of foods from each food group and follow the State or Federal guidelines for the food groupings that are required for a meal or snack.
- Include vegetables and fruits as snacks, as they may be missed at meals.

Follow the Meal Planning Guidelines

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Meals and Snacks

Last Published: 06/18/2015

Here are the current requirements for serving meals to children in CACFP. The meal patterns give you guidance on the minimum number of components and amounts of food which must be served as part of a breakfast, lunch, snack or supper.

Children: http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/Child_Meals.pdf

It is highly recommended that menus be posted for parents; however, before posting the menus make sure of the following:

Meal Planning Checklist:

- Do all snacks include at least 2 food groups?
- Do all meals include all 4 food groups?
- Do all food group servings measure at least ½ of a defined serving?
- Are green and orange vegetables recommended every day?
- Are whole grain products used most often?
- Are there contrasts in texture, shape, flavor and color?
- Are the foods safe for all ages of children, who you will be feeding?
- Are menu items varied with no repetitions?
- Are foods within budget? Be budget conscious

Keeping daily records of the meals is important - it only takes about five minutes a day to record the meal/snack components and to record the children in attendance for each meal. This can be completed on an excel spreadsheet or by using a web based resource.

Developing a menu plan for 2 week periods/intervals is a recommended minimum, however, many daycare homes plan 1 month in advance. e.g. at the beginning of June, you are planning July menus. This encourages the planning of including local, fresh foods which are available seasonally, into the menu plan.

Menu Planning by Age Group

It is important to follow your State Agencies guidelines in all cases. The following is a general guideline for a full day.

Children ages 2 and 3

- Vegetables and fruit 4 servings
- Grain products 3 servings
- Milk and alternatives 2 servings
- Meat and alternatives 1 serving

Children ages 4 and 5

- Vegetables and fruit 5 servings
- Grain products 4 servings
- Milk and alternatives 2 servings
- Meat and alternatives 1 serving

Here is a sample menu of how to plan out the day's meals for a 4 year old.

Morning Snack

- 4 oz peaches
- 2 whole grain crackers
- Small cup of water 2 - 4 oz.

Food Guide Servings* (see page 19)

- 1 Vegetable or Fruit
- ½ Grain Products

Lunch/Meal

- 1 ½ -2.0 oz chicken chunks
- 1 ½ oz cooked peas
- 1 slice whole wheat bread
- ¼ cup sliced pineapple
- 1 ½ oz cheese chunks
- 6.0 oz 1% or 2% milk

Food Guide Servings*

- 1 Vegetable
- 1 Fruit
- 1 Grain Product
- 1 Milk and Alternatives
- ½ serving Meat and Alternatives

Afternoon Snack

- ½ banana or ½ stick of celery
- ½ small bran muffin
- 6.0 oz cup yogurt
- Small cup of water 2- 4 oz.

Food Guideline Servings*

- 1 Vegetable or Fruit
- 1 Grain Product
- 1 Milk and Alternatives

Total for Day:

- o 3 servings Vegetables and Fruits
- o 2 servings Grain/Bread Products
- o 2 servings Milk and Alternatives
- o ½ serving Meat and Alternatives

Notes:

*Servings are not necessarily the same as ‘portions’.

For pre-school children, divide servings into small portions.

Spread the portions over the day.

For example:

Four year old Adam should have 2 servings of milk and alternatives per day.

His stomach is small so he could have 4 portions during the day.

In the foregoing example, he could have had one 3 oz portion for breakfast.

Important Note: Water availability to children

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (the Act), Public Law 111-296, establishes a requirement for making water available to children in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).

It is required that water is available to children, at no charge, in the place where lunch meals are served during the meal service. There are a variety of ways that schools/daycares can implement this requirement. For example, schools/daycares can offer water pitchers and cups on lunch tables, a water fountain, or a faucet that allows students to fill their own bottles or cups with drinking water. Whatever solution is chosen, the water must be available without restriction, in the location where meals are served.

- Only fat-free or low-fat (1%) unsweetened, plain milk for children two years of age or older.
- No more than one serving per day of 100 percent juice is recommended
- Beverages with added sweeteners, either natural or artificial, are prohibited (not including infant formula or complete balanced nutritional products designed for children) in several States.

Morning Snacks - select two of the following:

- 1 -Full strength vegetable or fruit juice or an equivalent quantity of any combination of vegetable(s), fruit(s) and juice...e.g. tomato or pomegranate
- 2 - Juice may not be served when milk is the only other component
- 3 - Grains/Breads must be enriched or whole-grain or made from whole-grain or enriched flour or meal that may include bran and/or germ cereal must be whole-grain or enriched or fortified.
- 3b- A serving is a slice of bread or an equivalent serving of biscuits, rolls etc or ½ cup of cooked noodles, rice, macaroni, other pasta products or cereal grains
- 4 - When serving cold dry cereal use volume (cup) or weight (oz.) whichever is less
- 5 - A serving consists of the edible portion of 'cooked' lean meat or poultry or fish
- 6 -Alternate protein products must meet State requirements
- 7 -Nuts and seeds are generally not recommended to be served to children ages 1-3 since they present a choking hazard. If served, nuts and seeds should be finely minced.
- 8 - Yogurt may be plain or flavored, unsweetened or sweetened - and commercially prepared

Lunch – Serve All 4 Components

Food Item	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-5
Milk (fluid)	4 fl. oz.	6 fl. Oz. (¾ cup)
Vegetable or Fruit ¹ (Two)		
Juice, fruit and/or vegetable	2 oz.(1/4 cup)	4 oz. (1/2 cup)
Grains/Breads ^{2,2b,2c} (see below)		
Bread or	½ slice	½ slice
Cornbread/Biscuit		
Roll or Muffin ^{2b} or	½ serving	½ serving
Cooked cereal grains or	¼ cup	¼ cup
Cooked pasta or noodles	1/4 cup	¼ cup
Meat/Meat Alternate ^{3,4,5,6,7,8}		
Lean meat or poultry		
or fish	1 oz.	1½ oz.
Alternate protein food	1 oz.	1½ oz.
Cheese or	1 oz.	1½ oz.
Egg (large) or	½ large cooked egg	¾ large cooked egg or medium egg
Cooked dry beans ⁵		
Peas or	1/4 cup	3/8 cup
Nut or seed butters or	2 Tbsp	3 Tbsp
Nuts and/or seeds ⁷	½ oz.	¾ oz.
Yogurt ⁸	4 oz. or ½ cup	6 oz. or ¾ cup

1. -Two or more servings of different vegetable(s), fruit(s) or both. Full-strength vegetable or fruit juice may be counted to meet not more than ½ of this requirement
- 2 -Grains/Breads must be enriched or whole-grain or made from whole-grain or enriched flour or meal that may include bran and/or germ Cereal must be whole-grain or enriched or fortified.
- 2b – A serving is a slice of bread or an equivalent serving of biscuits, rolls etc or ½ cup of cooked noodles, rice, macaroni, other pasta products or cereal grains
- 2c – Enriched macaroni with fortified protein may be used as a grains/bread item but not if it is being used as a meat alternate in the same meal
- 3 –A serving consists of the edible portion of ‘cooked’ lean meat or poultry or fish
- 4- Alternate protein products must meet State requirements – enriched macaroni with fortified protein may be used to meet part of the meat or meat alternate requirement
- 5- Cooked dry beans or peas may be used as a meat alternate or as a vegetable but not as both components in the same meal
- 6-Nuts and seeds may meet only ½ of the total meat/meat alternate serving and must be combined with another meat/meat alternate to fulfill the lunch time requirement
- 7-Nuts and seeds are generally not recommended to be served to children ages 1-3 since they present a choking hazard. If served, nuts and seeds should be finely minced.
Nuts may also be used to meet no more than 50% of the meat, meat alternate requirement.
1 oz. of cooked lean meat, poultry or fish is equivalent to 1 oz of nuts/seeds
- 8- Yogurt may be plain or flavored, unsweetened or sweetened – and commercially prepared

Food Item	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-5
Milk (fluid)	4 fl. oz.	4 fl. Oz. (1/2 cup)
Vegetable or Fruit ^{1, 2} (see below)	4 oz.	4 oz. (1/2 cup)
Grains/Breads ^{3, 4}		
Bread or Cornbread/Biscuit	1/2 slice	1/2 slice
Roll or Muffin ^{3b} or	1/2 serving	1/2 serving
Cold dry cereal ⁴ or	1/4 cup or 1/3 oz	1/3 cup or 1/2 oz.
Cooked cereal grains or	1/4 cup	1/4 cup
Cooked pasta or noodles	1/4 cup	1/4 cup
Meat/Meat Alternate ^{5,6,7,8}		
Lean meat or poultry or fish	1/2 oz.	1/2 oz.
Alternate protein food	1/2 oz.	1/2 oz.
Cheese or	1/2 oz.	1/2 oz.
Egg (large) or	1/2 large cooked egg	1/2 large cooked egg or a small egg
Cooked dry beans		
Peas or	1/8 cup	1/8 cup
Nut or seed butters or	1 Tbsp	1 Tbsp
Nuts and/or seeds ⁷	1/2 oz.	1/2 oz.
Yogurt ⁸	2 oz. or 1/4 cup	2 oz. or 1/4 cup

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Helpful Hints to Choose Foods for Everyday Menus

Vegetables and Fruit

Choose a variety of:

- Fresh, frozen or canned vegetables
- Fresh, frozen or canned fruit
- Dried fruit* 100% pure fruit or vegetable juice
(limit to ½ cup/125 mL/ 4 oz per day)
- Apple sauce (unsweetened)
- Vegetable soup (no or low salt)
- Salads (avoid iceberg lettuce)

Bread, Cereal, Rice, and Pasta

- Select 100% whole grain:
- Rice (brown, wild) Couscous, quinoa, whole rye
- Pasta, bread, buns, bagels, pita, naan, wraps, pancakes
- Cold cereal with less than 8 g sugar, & more than 2 g fibre
(such as bran or wheat)
- Hot cereal
- Snack Crackers
- Cookies and granola Bar

Milk, Yogurt, and Cheese

- Milk, white
- Almond Milk, Coconut Milk
- Hard cheeses, 20% MF or less
- Plain yogurt, 2% MF or less

Meat, Poultry, Fish, Dry Beans, Eggs, and Nuts

Choose a variety of:

- Lean beef or lamb
- Poultry (without skin) -turkey, chicken (white meats recommended)
- Canned/fresh fish
- Eggs
- Tofu
- Dried peas, chick peas, lentils and beans (kidney, white or brown)
- Nuts and seeds
- Nut butters (non-hydrogenated)
- Homemade stew
- Beef or chicken soup
- Lean, low salt, sliced, cold meats
- Hamburger patty

Mixed Dishes may include two or more of the four food groups.

For example, Lasagna:

- Vegetables and tomato sauce: Vegetables or Fruit
- Whole grain noodles: Grain Products
- 20% MF cheese: Milk and Alternatives
- Lean ground beef: Meat and Alternatives

Choose “Most Often” Snack Ideas

Fruit and Milk & Alternatives

Note Symbols: * Choking Hazard ** Allergy Alert

- Apples* and cheese
- Fruit and unsweetened yogurt dip
- Fruit slices such as Kiwi
- Unsweetened applesauce and milk
- Yogurt or fruit (fresh or canned)
- Pineapple bits*, grated carrot and milk
- Whole wheat pita pockets with apple and cheese
- Banana and milk
- Banana people (raisins* or dried apricots* for eyes) and milk

Vegetable and Meat & Alternatives

- Egg and veggie fry-ups (omelet)
- Salmon or white Tuna boats (half bell pepper, fill with white tuna or salmon salad, cheese on toothpick for a sail)
- Ant on a log (celery sticks*, nut butter**, black ants – raisins*)

Fruit and Meat & Alternatives

- Apple smiles (on a plate, put apple wedges for smile and use nut butter** for eyes)
- Trail mix* and **, 100% real fruit juice (low sugar content)
- Kiwi slices cut into wheels (circles)
- Mini quiche (veggie and cheese) and 100% real fruit juice
- Chicken Chunks

Fruit and Grain Products

- Whole grain crackers, apples and fruit sauce
- Whole-wheat toast, nut butter** and sliced banana
- Whole grain cereal and apple slices
- Blueberries and oatmeal cereal

- Whole grain waffle fingers dipped in apple sauce

Vegetables and Grain Products

- Veggie wraps
- Whole grain raisin bread, grated (not cut) carrots and 100% low sugar, real fruit juice
- Celery sticks*, cheese and whole grain bread sticks
- Broccoli* forest with whole grain muffin (animal hides among the trees)

Grain Products and Meat & Alternatives

- White tuna or salmon and crackers
- Hard boiled egg and crackers
- Pizza toast or naan bread
- Homemade pasta salad and cold sliced meat
- Whole wheat pita bread and hummus

Recipes, Ideas & Resources

For easiest access to these resources, copy and paste the specific website address into your web browser.

National Resources:

Recipes for Healthy Kids: Cookbooks for Child Care Centers and Schools

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/recipes-healthy-kids-cookbook-child-care-centers-0>

What's Cooking – USDA Mixing Bowl

<http://www.whatscooking.fns.usda.gov/>

Meal/Snack Patterns and Ideas for Daycare Centers

Choose My Plate

<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/preschoolers/meal-and-snack-patterns-ideas.html>

The sample meal and snack patterns can help you translate 'Daily Food Plan amounts' into individual meals and snacks.

Meal and Snack Patterns Available through this website

For each Daily Food Plan calorie level, there are two different sample Meal and Snack patterns. These patterns are examples of how the Daily Food Plan can be divided into meals and snacks for a preschooler. There are many ways to divide the amounts recommended from each food group, into daily meals and snacks.

Meal and Snack Ideas list several specific *food* ideas for each meal and snack in each pattern. Use these sample meals and snacks, for ideas on how to increase the variety of foods you serve.

Check the table provided, to find the right calorie level for your child and then choose a sample meal and snack pattern for that calorie level. See ideas for each calorie level:

- [1000 Calorie Patterns](#)
- [1200 Calorie Patterns](#)
- [1400 Calorie Patterns](#)
- [1600 Calorie Patterns](#)

Recipes for Healthy Kids Cookbooks: Cookbook for Child Care Centers

USDA Recipes Resource

<http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/recipes-healthy-kids-cookbooks/recipes-healthy-kids-cookbooks-cookbook-child-care-centers>

USDA Food and Nutrition Service - Nutrition. Gov

<http://www.nutrition.gov/food-assistance-programs/child-nutrition-programs>

Snacks That Count – Recipes for Nutritious Snacks – State of Texas

<http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/hsmrs/Texas/SnacksThatCount.pdf>

What's Cookin' for Daycare Centers – State of Nebraska

http://www.education.ne.gov/NS/CACFP/WhatsCookin/Whats_Cookin_II_complete.pdf

'Institute of Child Nutrition' Childcare Menus

Menus for Child Care #1 offers eight complete weekly menus, including breakfast, lunch or supper and snack, meeting the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Meal Pattern requirements for 3-5 year olds.

<http://www.nfsmi.org/ResourceOverview.aspx?ID=196>

Selected Regional Resources:

A Month of Daycare Menus

<http://stepbystepcc.com/menu.html>

21 Day Menu Planner at a Glance- Ages 3-5 years

http://www.isbe.net/nutrition/pdf/21-day_cycle_sample.pdf

California Childcare Centre Menus Ages 3-5, University of Purdue,

A wide range of menu planning suggestions

<http://webs.purduecal.edu/rcc/school-menu/>

Delaware –Department of Education and Community Nutrition Programs

16 weeks of Delaware CACFP approved menus

120 recipes with nutritional information

<http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/hsmrs/Delaware/nhpsmenuplanning.pdf>

Idaho –City of Boise Childcare Resources

<http://www.boisechildcare.com/resources/>

Illinois Child Care Bureau Recipes

Meal Pattern Planning for Ages 1-5 and Recipes

<http://www.illinoischildren.com/category/recipes/>

Iowa Department of Education, Bureau of Nutrition and Health Services Healthy Snacks 2- 4 year olds.

https://www.educateiowa.gov/sites/files/ed/documents/1213_np_tn_lt_PAandSnack_v2.pdf

Kansas – Kansas State University, Kids A Cookin’ Recipes

Kids a Cookin' is produced for K-State Research and Extension's Family Nutrition Program (FNP) by the Department of Communications and the Kansas Regents Educational Communications Center (ECC). Available in English and Spanish.

<http://www.kidsacookin.org/recipes.htm>

Cycle Menu for Maine Childcare

Five Week Menu Cycle -The menu cycle provides menus for 5 weeks of breakfast, lunch and afternoon snacks. The menu is designed for children ages 3-5 years old.

There are 60 recipes included in Appendix A and they are organized alphabetically by recipe name.

<http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/maineroads/pdfs/CACFP/Resources/Childcare%20Menu%20Cycle/TNCycleMenu2013.pdf>

Michigan Tech University –Childcare Menus

Gretchen’s House Child Care Centers

Young 5, Preschool and Toddler

<http://www.mtu.edu/childcare/menu.htm>

Mid-Michigan Child Care Food Program

– 45 Recipes for Meat/Meat Alternative, Vegetables/Fruit and Breads/Grains

http://midmichigancc.com/main/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=26&Itemid=42

Minnesota State –Lana “The Iguana’ Favorite Recipes

The recipes are intended to be used for the home or a child care setting.

Working with preschool children, their parents, and staff in 22 child care centers, researchers from the Minnesota Department of Health and the University of Minnesota partnered with New Horizon Academy, a childcare corporation based in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area of Minnesota, to develop and test the LANA Preschool Program.

<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hpcd/chp/cdrn/nutrition/nutritioneducation/lana/pdf/favoriterecipescookbook.pdf>

Missouri Eat Smart – Sample Menus and Recipes

28 recipes for a 4 week cycle.

http://health.mo.gov/living/wellness/nutrition/eatsmartguidelines/pdf/Menus_and_Recipes.pdf

New York State Childcare 28 day Food Plan Menu Ages 3-5 years

<https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/nutrition/cacfp/docs/cacfp-182.pdf>



This summary of resources and information for pre-school children ages 1 to 5 has been developed as part of the Childhood Disease Research Foundation program, to help educate communities and families about good health, safe food practices, menu planning, nutritious recipes and the development of body building eating habits.