



Healthy Summer Meals

Summer Meal Programs can help ensure that children eat a variety of foods and beverages rich in nutrients, all year round. This toolkit page highlights best practices you can use to serve meals that are nourishing and appealing. These tips can go a long way in creating healthy habits for kids that can last a lifetime!

Go to [Resources](#).

Nutrition Tips

Go for whole grains!

- Choose foods that name a whole-grain ingredient *first* on the list, such as: whole wheat, brown rice, oatmeal, whole oats, whole rye, whole-grain cornmeal, bulgur, buckwheat, or wild rice.
- Remember whole-grains cannot be identified based on the color of the food. Read the nutrition facts label and ingredient list to choose whole-grain foods.
- Make simple switches by substituting a whole-grain product for a refined-grain product. For example, try 100 percent whole-wheat bread in place of white bread.
- Try whole-wheat versions of grain products you already serve, such as brown rice or whole-wheat pasta.

Offer a rainbow of color!

- Brighten meals by serving dark green, orange, yellow, red and purple fruits and vegetables.
- Buy fruits and vegetables that are in season when they are less expensive and at the peak of their flavor.
- Check the freezer aisle. Frozen vegetables are quick and easy to use and are just as nutritious as fresh vegetables.
- Stock up. Buy canned vegetables or canned fruit in water or 100 percent juice so you always have a supply on hand.
- Choose whole or cut-up fruit more often than fruit juice to get the added benefit of fiber.



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Summer Meals Toolkit

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Choose lower-fat foods!

- Serve only low-fat (one percent) or fat-free (skim) milk. Lower-fat dairy products have just as much calcium, potassium and other essential nutrients compared to whole-fat dairy products but with less fat.
- Offer a variety of protein foods in your menu. Choose lean or low-fat cuts of meat and poultry, or serve fish, beans (such as pinto beans, white beans, or chickpeas), or nuts.
- Limit or avoid fried and pre-fried foods. Instead, offer baked, broiled or grilled chicken, fish, or vegetables.

Offer unsweetened or naturally sweetened foods!

- Serve fruit as a naturally sweet desert.
- Use fruit to sweeten plain yogurt.
- Serve unflavored milk.
- Read the nutrition facts label to select food products lowest in sugar.

Avoid too much sodium!

- Limit or avoid processed meats, such as luncheon meats and hot dogs.
- Choose fresh foods which generally are lower in sodium. When using canned vegetables with added salt, rinse them before serving.
- Use herbs to season foods instead of salt.
- Cut back on salt little by little so children's taste buds will adjust and their taste for salt will lessen over time.
- Look for foods labeled as low sodium, reduced sodium, or no salt added.





Age-Appropriate Meals

Infants

An infant's dietary needs are unique and may be more complicated than toddlers and older children. Sponsors wishing to serve infants must first receive approval from the State agency. All meals served to infants must comply with the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) infant meal pattern requirements, under 7 CFR 226.20(b) of the CACFP regulations. The State agency can help you ensure that your meals comply with these requirements.

Children 1 through 6 years old

Sponsors may offer smaller portion sizes to younger children by demonstrating to the State agency that portion sizes can be controlled. The sponsor must follow the CACFP age-appropriate meal pattern requirements for children, under 7 CFR 226.20(c) of the CACFP regulations.

Children 12 to 18 years old

Because teenagers have greater food needs, sponsors may serve adult-size portions to older children. Adult-size portions may be found at 7 CFR 226.20(c) of the CACFP regulations. As a reminder, extra food, beyond the food needed to meet the meal pattern minimum requirements, may always be served to improve the nutrition of participating children.





Menu and Snack Ideas

Kids like to eat finger foods that are different shapes, colors, sizes, fun and easy to pick-up and explore. Try foods that can be dipped in a sauce, offer new tastes, and allow children to learn something new. Here are some tasty examples!

Sample Menus

Breakfast	Whole-Grain Cereal Fresh Berries (no sugar added) Fat-Free Milk	Whole-Wheat English Muffin Peanut Butter Banana Fat-Free Milk
Lunch or Supper	Southwest Chicken Wrap (whole-wheat tortilla wrap, chicken, lettuce, salsa) Black Beans (no added fat) Pineapple Chunks Fat-Free Milk	Whole-Wheat Pasta with Tomato Sauce Canned Tuna Broccoli Seasoned Peas Fat-Free Milk
Snack	Yellow Pepper Strips, Carrots, and Cherry Tomatoes Hummus Water	Fat-Free Plain Yogurt Fresh Mango Whole-Grain Granola





You can also pick food items from the various required food components to help you plan healthy snacks!

Meat or Meat Alternates	Vegetables	Fruits	100% Full-strength Juices	Whole-Grains and Breads	Dips and Sauces
Low-fat or fat-free cheese cubes or sticks Low-fat or fat-free yogurt Peanut butter Almond butter Turkey rollups Canned salmon or tuna	Baby carrots Celery sticks Snow peas or snap peas Bell pepper slices Peas Cauliflower Yellow squash Radishes Cucumber Cherry tomatoes Tomato slices Broccoli Corn Turnip sticks Zucchini sticks	Bananas Grapes Orange or apple slices Cubed watermelon, pineapple, honey dew or cantaloupe Kiwi slices Nectarines Papaya Berries Pitted cherries Peach or mango slices Dried fruits (apricots, cranberries, prunes, raisins, etc.)	Orange Apple Pineapple Grape Prune Grapefruit Tangerine Grapefruit-orange Tomato Vegetable	Pita bread triangles Crackers Baked tortilla chips Graham crackers Bagel bites Low-fat Granola Whole-grain cereals Rice cakes	Low-fat or fat-free yogurt dip Salsa Guacamole Cucumber sauce Hummus





Resources

USDA

- *Nutrition Guidance for Sponsors*
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/NutritionGuide.pdf>
- *Healthy Meals Resource System*
<http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/menu-planning/usda-food-commodity-resources>
- *Team Nutrition*
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/team-nutrition>
- *What's Cooking? Recipe Bowl*
<http://www.whatscooking.fns.usda.gov/>
- *MyPlate Ten Tips Nutrition Education Series*
<http://choosemyplate.gov/healthy-eating-tips/ten-tips.html>
- *Summer Meals Toolkit*
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/summer-meals-toolkit>
 - *Serving Reimbursable Meals*
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/cnd/SMT-ReimbursableMeal.pdf>
 - *Planning Your Menu*
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/cnd/SMT-PlanningYourMenu.pdf>
 - *Meal Service Best Practices*
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/cnd/SMT-MealServiceBestPractices.pdf>





National Institutes of Health

- *We Can!*
<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/wecan/>
 - *Food Shopping Tips*
<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/wecan/eat-right/smart-food-shopping.htm>
 - *Recipes*
<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/wecan/tools-resources/nutrition.htm#recipes>
 - *Healthy Snacks*
<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/wecan/downloads/hundredcalories.pdf>

For Additional Information

Review these ideas and adopt the strategies that seem reasonable to you and achievable for your Program. For additional questions, sponsors and the general public should contact their State agency for help. State agencies should contact their Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Regional Office.

List of FNS Regional Offices: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns-regional-offices>

List of State Agencies: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Contacts/StateDirectory.htm>

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