

Crediting Infant Foods

This section on Infant Foods is from USDA's *What's in a Meal? A Resource Manual for Providing Nutritious Meals in the Child and Adult Care Food Program*

Infant Foods

The term *infant* refers to children from birth through 11 months of age. Meals served to infants must follow the [CACFP Infant Meal Pattern](#). A copy of the infant meal pattern can be found on the Guidance Memorandum webpage.

Child care facilities should work closely with parents when deciding what foods to serve infants. Likewise, the decision to introduce solid foods should be made with parents.

Because infants have small appetites and may not be able to eat a complete meal in one setting, foods required by the infant meal pattern may be served to infants over a period of time.

For more information, refer to the publication, *Feeding Infants: A Guide for Use in the Child Nutrition Programs* (FNS-258).

Crediting Infant Foods: See the Infant Meal Pattern Chart for Serving Sizes

Infant Foods				
Food Item	Creditable		Comments	Nutrition Information
	Yes	No		
Bread	X		Bread, including dry bread, toast, biscuits, bagels, english muffins, pita bread, rolls, and soft tortillas, are creditable for snack for infants 6-11 months of age.	Bread must be made from whole grain, bran, germ and/or enriched meal or flour to be creditable. Bread should not contain nuts, seeds or hard pieces of whole grain kernels.
Breast milk	X		Breast milk is creditable to serve for as long as the mother chooses to breastfeed. When an infant is eating foods, meals containing breast milk may be claimed when the facility is providing all other meal components.	Breast milk is the best food for infants. It provides energy and all-important nutrients in appropriate amounts for infants. The only creditable alternate to breast milk is iron fortified infant formula.
Cereal, hot		X	“Adult” hot cereals, including oatmeal and farina, are not creditable for infants.	Raisins and nuts in “adult” cereals may cause choking.
Cereal, infant with fruit		X	It is difficult to determine the amount of cereal and fruit.	
Cereal, iron fortified infant	X		Iron fortified dry cereals specially formulated and recognized for infants are creditable.	The iron in iron fortified infant cereals is designed to be easily absorbed by infants.
Cereal, ready-to-eat breakfast, including infant puffs	X		Ready-to-eat breakfast cereals, including infant puffs, are creditable for infants 6-11 months of age for snack. Cereal must contain no more than 6 grams of sugar per dry ounce.	Cereals must be enriched, fortified or whole grain, and meet the sugar limits for cereal. Raisins and nuts in ready-to-eat breakfast cereals may cause choking and should not be served to infants.
Cheese (natural cheese, cottage cheese)	X		Natural cheese and cottage cheese are creditable when served at breakfast, lunch, or supper to infants 6-11 months of age.	Cheese food or cheese spread are not creditable.
Chicken Nuggets	X		See: Processed meats and poultry	
Chocolate		X	Chocolate should not be served to infants under one year of age because it is high in sugar and/or fat.	

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	Yes	No		
Combination dinners/foods, commercial baby food		X	The amount of each component in commercial combination meals is difficult to determine. When preparing foods at the center, after measuring the appropriate amount of each individual item, plain meats may be mixed with vegetables.	Commercial combination baby food dinners/foods have less nutritional value by weight than single ingredient foods.
Crackers	X		Crackers, including saltine, snack, animal, graham, Zwieback or matzo crackers may be credited at snack only when served to developmentally ready infants 6-11 months of age.	Crackers must be made from whole grain and/or enriched meal or flour. Crackers should not contain nuts, seeds, hard pieces of whole grain kernels or honey.
Desserts, baby food		X		Desserts are high in sugar and/or fat and often contain less of the key nutrients needed by infants.
Egg	X		Whole egg (white and yolk) is creditable when served at breakfast, lunch, or supper to 6-11 month old infants.	
Fish sticks	X		See: Processed meats and poultry	
Formula, follow-up	X		Follow-up formulas are designed for older infants consuming solid foods. Follow-up formulas are creditable when served to infants 6 months of age or older.	Follow-up formulas are not creditable when served to infants less than 6 months of age, except when served as substitutions supported by a medical statement.
Formula, iron fortified or with iron	X		Iron fortified infant formulas, including soy-based formulas, are creditable. Iron fortified formula recommended by the infant's health care provider should be served. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that, during the first year of life, the only acceptable alternate to breast milk is iron fortified infant formula and that low iron formula not be used.	Iron fortified infant formula contains 1 milligram or more of iron in a quantity of product that supplies 100 kilo-calories when prepared in accordance with label directions for infant consumption. The amount of iron in a product is specified on the label.
Formula, low iron		X	Only iron fortified infant formula is creditable.	Low iron infant formulas contain less than 1 milligram of iron per 100 kilo-calories of formula. Infants need to receive an adequate amount of iron in the first year to maintain health.

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	Yes	No		
Fruit	X		Plain commercial baby food fruits are creditable when served at breakfast, lunch, supper, and snack to infants 6-11 months old. Mixed fruits and vegetables (i.e. apple/blueberry or banana/carrot/mango) are creditable.	Raw fruits may cause choking if not prepared (cooked, if necessary and/or pureed or mashed) to the appropriate texture for an infant.
Fruit and vegetable juice blend		X	Fruit and vegetable juice blends are not creditable for infants.	
Fruit drink		X	Fruit drinks are not creditable.	Fruit drinks are high in sugar.
Fruit juice		X	Full strength (100%) fruit juice, including infant and adult varieties, are not creditable for infants.	Fruit juice, even 100% fruit juice, is high in sugar.
Fruit punch		X	Fruit punch is not creditable.	Fruit punch is high is sugar.
Home canned infant foods		X	Home canned infant foods should not be served due to the risk of food borne illness.	
Honey		X	Honey, and foods that contain honey, should never be fed to babies less than 1 year of age. Honey should not be added to food, water, or formula that is fed to babies, or used as an ingredient in cooking or baking (e.g., yogurt with honey, baked goods that contain honey). This also applies to commercially prepared foods such as cereals sweetened with honey or honey graham crackers.	Honey may contain substances that can cause “infant botulism,” a serious type of food-related illness that can make a baby very sick.
Hot dogs (frankfurters), sausage	X		Processed meats such as hot dogs (frankfurters) and sausage may be part of a reimbursable meal; however, they are not recommended. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends limiting these foods because they are higher in sodium than other meat products.	If served, these foods can, and must, be prepared in a way to reduce choking. Always cut foods to no more than ½ inch in size to avoid choking. All foods served to infants must be prepared in the appropriate texture and consistency for the age and development of the infant. Hot dogs and sausage must be free of byproducts, cereals, and extenders in order to be creditable in the infant meal pattern.
Infant Puffs	X		Infant puffs are creditable as a ready-to-eat cereal for infants 6-11 months of age for snack.	Puffs must be enriched, fortified or whole grain, and must contain no more than 6 grams of sugar per dry ounce.

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Food Item	Creditable		Comments	Nutrition Information
	Yes	No		
Juice		X	See: Fruit and Vegetable Juice Blend, Fruit Juice or Vegetable Juice.	
Legumes (dry or canned beans and peas)	X		Cooked dry beans and dry peas are creditable when served at breakfast, lunch or supper to infants 6-11 months of age.	Dried or canned legumes should be prepared (mashed or pureed) to the appropriate texture for infants. Whole cooked legumes may cause choking in infants.
Meat	X		Plain commercial baby food meats are creditable when served at breakfast, lunch or supper to infants 6-11 months of age.	Fresh or frozen meats should be cooked thoroughly and then prepared (pureed, ground or finely chopped) to the appropriate texture for infants.
Meat sticks (finger sticks)	X		Processed meats such as infant meat and poultry sticks (not dried or semi-dried, not jerky) may be part of a reimbursable meal; however, they are not recommended. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends limiting these foods because they are higher in sodium than other meat products.	If served, these foods can, and must, be prepared in a way to reduce choking. Always cut foods to no more than ½ inch in size to avoid choking. All foods served to infants must be prepared in the appropriate texture and consistency for the age and development of the infant. Infant meat and poultry sticks must be free of byproducts, cereals, and extenders in order to be creditable in the infant meal pattern.
Milk, low fat (1%)		X	Low fat milk is not creditable for infants.	Milk does not contain all nutrients needed for an infant's growth and development. Milk can also place stress on an infants' kidneys and cause blood loss through the intestines, which can lead to iron deficiency anemia.
Milk, nonfat (fat free or skim)		X	Nonfat milk is not creditable for infants.	
Milk, reduced fat (2%)		X	Reduced fat milk is not creditable for infants.	
Milk, whole		X	Whole milk is not creditable for infants.	
Nuts		X	Nuts, seeds and nut and/or seed butters may cause choking and should never be served to infants.	
Peanut butter		X	Peanut butter should not be served to children less than one year of age because it may cause choking.	

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	Yes	No		
Processed meats and poultry (chicken nuggets, fish sticks)	X		<p>Processed meats such as chicken nuggets and fish sticks may be part of a reimbursable meal; however, they are not recommended. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends limiting these foods because they are higher in sodium than other meat products.</p> <p>If served, these foods can, and must, be prepared in a way to reduce choking</p>	A Child Nutrition Label or product formulation statement is required for these foods to determine the number of pieces per serving and document that portions meet the meal pattern requirements. Only the chicken and fish portion, not the breaded portion, of chicken nuggets and fish sticks are creditable as a meat.
Sausage	X		See: Hot dogs (frankfurters), sausage	
Shellfish	X			
Soy formula	X		See: Formula, iron fortified or with iron	
Vegetables	X		Plain commercial baby food vegetables are creditable when served to infants 6-11 months old at breakfast, lunch, supper, or snack. Mixed fruits and vegetables (i.e. peas/carrots or banana/carrot/mango) are creditable.	Fresh or frozen vegetables should be cooked and then prepared (pureed or mashed) to the appropriate texture for infants. Raw vegetables are not recommended for infants because they may cause choking.
Vegetable juice		X	Vegetable juice is not creditable for infants.	
Yogurt	X		Yogurt is creditable for infants 6-11 months old for breakfast, lunch, or supper.	All yogurts served in the CACFP must contain no more than 23 grams of sugar per 6 ounces.
Zwieback	X		See: Crackers	