

USDA INFANT AND PRESCHOOL MEAL PATTERN IN SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Meat/Meat Alternate Component



This handout provides information about the meat/meat alternate (M/MA) requirements under the Infant and Preschool meal pattern. These requirements are for School Food Authorities (SFAs) serving children aged 1-5 years old and not yet in kindergarten (5K). A separate handout on the new infant meal pattern requirements is available.

Meat/Meat Alternates Component Requirements

- A M/MA may be served in place of the entire grains component at breakfast a maximum of three times per week.
- To be consistent with older grade groups, tofu and soy yogurt may be served as a meat alternate.
- Yogurt must contain no more than 23 grams of sugar per 6 oz.

Tofu

Commercially prepared firm, extra firm, silken, and soft tofu varieties are creditable as a meat alternate. Tofu is only creditable for children ages 1 year and older. It cannot be served to infants as part of a reimbursable meal. Tofu can be served in a variety of ways, such as in stir fries or omelets.

Crediting Commercially Prepared Creditable Tofu

- 2.2 oz. ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup) of tofu, containing at least 5 grams of protein = 1.0 oz. M/MA
- Request a CN label or Product Formulation Statement (PFS) when needed (e.g., sausage links made with tofu)

Yogurt

To reduce infants' and preschoolers' consumption of added sugars, yogurt (including soy yogurt) must contain no more than 23 grams of sugar per 6 oz. Use one of the following methods to determine if your yogurt is below the sugar limit:

1. Use USDA's Team Nutrition training worksheet [Choose Yogurts That Are Lower in Added Sugar](#). The worksheet includes a chart with common yogurt serving sizes (in ounces and grams) and the maximum amount of sugar the yogurt may contain per serving.
2. Use the Nutrition Facts Label on the yogurt packaging to calculate the sugar content per ounce.
 - First, find the serving size in ounces at the top of the label and the grams of sugar listed towards the middle.

- Next, divide the total sugars in grams by the serving size in ounces.
- If the answer is less than 3.83, then the yogurt is within the required sugar limit and may be creditable.

Q&A:

Q: The M/MA serving size is 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce equivalent (oz. eq.) for ages 3-5 years and the NSLP daily minimum for K-5 is 1 oz. eq. Do we need to serve the additional $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. eq. to students ages 3-5 years on days the grades K-5 menu provides 1 oz.?

A: Yes, 3-5 year olds do need a minimum 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. eq. of M/MA daily at lunch. Grades K-5 students need to offered a minimum of 1 oz. eq. of M/MA per day and a minimum of 8 oz. eq. over the week. There are no weekly minimums under the Infant and Preschool meal pattern.

Soy Yogurt

Soy yogurt is a dairy free option and credits the same as regular yogurt; $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (4 fl. oz.) = 1 oz. eq. M/MA. The sugar limits required for regular yogurt apply to soy yogurt. Soy yogurt cannot be served to infants as part of a reimbursable meal.

Meat/Meat Alternates at Breakfast

A M/MA may be served in place of the entire grains component at breakfast a maximum of three times per week.

Minimum Amount of M/MA Required at Breakfast	½ oz. eq.
Beans	⅓ cup
Cheese	½ oz.
Cottage or ricotta cheese	1 oz. (⅓ cup)
Eggs	¼ large egg
Lean meat, poultry or fish	½ oz. eq.
Nut butters	1 Tablespoon
Tofu, firm/extra firm	1.1 oz. (⅓ cup)
Yogurt (regular and soy)	2 oz. (¼ cup)

Q&A:

Q: If I only serve preschool students breakfast three times per week, can I serve a M/MA each day?

A: Yes, a school may serve a M/MA in place of the entire grains component at breakfast a maximum of three times per week, regardless of how many days breakfast is served to these students.

Sample Breakfast Menu with Meat/Meat Alternates

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Skim milk Scrambled eggs Kiwi	Skim milk Oatmeal Berries	Skim milk Cottage cheese Pineapple	Skim milk Whole grain cereal Banana	Skim milk Yogurt Oranges
Skim milk Pancakes Applesauce	Skim milk Bean burrito Apples	Skim milk Whole grain toast Strawberries	Skim milk String cheese Grapes	Skim milk Egg bake Mandarin oranges
Skim milk Tofu scramble Avocado	Skim milk Bran muffin Cantaloupe	Skim milk Hard-boiled eggs Blueberries	Skim milk Banana bread Orange wedges	Skim milk Peanut butter Apple slices
Skim milk Whole grain cereal Mixed fruit	Skim milk Fresh pork sausage Peaches	Skim milk WG English muffins Honeydew melon	Skim milk Scrambled eggs with Red peppers	Skim milk Cheese slices Tomatoes

Deep-Fat Frying

Submerging foods in hot oil or other fat may not be used as a cooking method to prepare meals on-site.

Recordkeeping Requirements

Records must document that students following the Infant and Preschool meal pattern are being served meals that meet the meal pattern requirements. Visit the School Nutrition Team [Menu Planning](#) webpage for more information on product documentation, production record requirements, and downloadable production record templates.



For more information, visit the [Infants and Preschool in NSLP and SBP](#) webpage.