

# USDA INFANT AND PRESCHOOL MEAL PATTERN IN SCHOOL PROGRAMS



## Milk Component

This handout provides information about the milk requirements under the Infant and Preschool meal pattern. These requirements are for School Food Authorities (SFAs) serving children age 1 to 5 years old and not yet in kindergarten (5K). A separate handout on the infant meal pattern requirements is available.

### Milk Component Requirements

These requirements apply to the School Breakfast Program, National School Lunch Program, Special Milk Program, and Afterschool Snack Program.

- Unlike the K-12 meal pattern, there is no requirement to offer students a variety of milk.
- A one-month transition period is allowed for children 24 to 25 months old. They may have whole or reduced-fat (2%) milk as they transition to low-fat (1%) or fat-free (skim) milk.
- If students 1 to 5 years old and not yet in kindergarten (5K) are served meals or snacks in the same place and at the same time as older students (comingled), they may follow the same meal pattern as the older students.

#### 1 year old (12-23 months)

- ✓ Unflavored whole milk

#### 2-5 years old and not yet in kindergarten (5K)

- ✓ Unflavored low-fat (1%) milk
- ✓ Unflavored fat-free (skim) milk

### Flavored Milk

#### Children 1 to 5 years old and not yet in kindergarten (5K)

- Flavored milk is not allowed as part of a reimbursable meal.
- Syrup (including zero calorie and sugar-free syrups) cannot be added to unflavored milk because this turns the beverage into flavored milk.
- Flavored milk includes chocolate, strawberry, and vanilla varieties.

#### Why can't flavored milk be served to children younger than kindergarten?

Research indicates that flavor and food preferences are shaped early in life and that the more sweet foods children consume, the more they prefer sweet foods. It is important to establish in young children the habit of drinking unflavored milk as they develop their taste preferences.

### Fluid Milk Substitutes

- Non-dairy beverages that are not nutritionally equivalent to cow's milk are only reimbursable when a medical statement is on file.
- You may choose to serve a nondairy milk substitute to students with a medical or special dietary need who do not have a signed medical statement.
  - You must obtain approval from the Department of Public Instruction School Nutrition Team (SNT) prior to serving fluid milk substitutes when a medical statement is not on file.
- Non-dairy beverages served to children younger than kindergarten must be unflavored.

Note: Breastmilk is an allowable fluid milk to serve children past 1 year of age, for as long as the mother chooses to breastfeed. No medical documentation is required.

### Water

Water must be offered and made available throughout the day to children, but may not be served in place of milk.

## Q&A

**Q:** I've noticed the milk serving size is smaller than the cartons we serve. Do we pour 6 oz. of milk in a cup for younger students?

**A:** The serving sizes on the meal pattern table are daily minimums to serve to students. Therefore, you may pour milk in  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup (4 fl. oz.) servings for 1 to 2 year olds and  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup (6 fl. oz.) servings for 3 to 5 year olds, or you may serve them the 1 cup (8 fl. oz.) milk cartons.

**Q:** If one-year-old and two-year-old children sit together for the same meal, must they be served different types of milk?

**A:** Yes, children 2 years old and older must be served unflavored low-fat or fat-free milk, and children one year of age must be served unflavored whole milk. The fluid milk requirements are based on age to ensure that children are receiving the nutrients they need for growth and development. Programs must ensure that children of various ages seated together receive the appropriate type of milk.

**Q:** If a parent requests a non-dairy fluid milk substitute that is not nutritionally equivalent to cow's milk because of a lifestyle choice without a medical note, can the SFA serve it and still receive reimbursement?

**A:** If a non-dairy fluid milk substitute is served that is **not nutritionally equivalent** to cow's milk, and there is no medical statement on file, then the meal is **not reimbursable**.

## 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 SNT [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.

## Try it Out!

1. The 1 year olds attending daycare at your school eat lunch in their classroom. Which type of milk should they be served?  

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2. The 3K and 4K students at your school are not comingled, and therefore must follow the Infant and Preschool meal pattern. Which of the following could they be served? Circle all correct answers.
  - A. 1 cup of skim unflavored milk
  - B.  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup skim chocolate milk
  - C.  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup low-fat (1%) unflavored milk
  - D.  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup low-fat (1%) unflavored milk with chocolate syrup added
3. The 4K and kindergarten (5K) students at your school eat lunch in the cafeteria at the same time. Which types of milk may be offered? Circle all correct answers.
  - A. Fat-free (skim) unflavored milk
  - B. Low-fat (1%) unflavored milk
  - C. Fat-free (skim) flavored milk
  - D. Lactose-free, fat-free (skim) chocolate milk
  - E. All of the above

Answers:

1. Unflavored whole milk
2. A and C
3. E